

THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION FROM THE BAHAMAS AND JAMAICA ON THE  
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY IN SOUTH FLORIDA, 1967-2017

A THESIS-PROJECT  
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To the four most important women in my life, my mother Vincella who fell ill during my first residency and left us that year. My wife Vinnette and my two daughters, Camille and Dannielle for the gifts they have been to me.

We will falter in our spirituality and thus grieve the Holy Spirit  
if our struggle with evil does not correspond to the geography of evil.

—Eldin Villafañe in *The Liberating Spirit*, 181

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## PREFACE

As an immigrant myself, I was struck on arrival in Florida with the stark reality that my perception of my church while residing in my homeland Jamaica was dead wrong. The church I found in South Florida was looking more like the church I left on the island and not the church I envisaged. The church was a “black” church and therefore not representative of the national demographic profile of being predominantly Caucasian. Attendance at State conventions and the International Assemblies provided a more diverse congregation, however, but this led to further concerns. Why could this same racial mix not be seen in my own local context?

Interaction with other churches across denominational boundaries confirms that the church of Jesus Christ continues to struggle to break the barriers that existed in the first century church. The concerns that prompted Paul’s affirmation, “There is neither Jew nor Gentiles, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28), are still relevant in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> There is no question about the individual’s commitment to Christ, but the cultural divide based on race makes it difficult to integrate. Where integration takes place, leadership is Caucasian and those congregations are growing. Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) congregations in South Florida are not just “black,” their congregants are predominantly immigrants from the Bahamas and Jamaica. Their Pentecostal expressions of worship are distinctly Caribbean and they are willing to plant churches where none exist.

My concern was heightened after interacting with a COGOP Caucasian pastor from the North East region (of whom more is said in chapter 1). For her, the separation

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the NIV, unless otherwise stated.



has nothing to do with race. This research into and reflection upon biblical and theological literature has added to my understanding of the issues involved and has certainly left me with a more open mind. The study aroused within me an acute awareness of the need to understand cross-cultural ministry. I have been forced through this thesis-project to view the racial divide that exists among us in the light of the *missio dei*. Instead of racism, which undoubtedly still exists, the issue must take on missiological overtones, in light of the witness of scripture:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Rev. 7:9-10)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to Jennifer M. for allowing me the use of her house for writing at the most crucial time of this exercise. The Administrative Office of the Churches of God of Prophecy, Leesburg, led by the Presiding Bishop, Bp. Robert F. Davis who pledged and gave his unwavering support to this project. To the staff of his office, Mrs. Heather Dotson and Bp. Troy Vernon for their full co-operation and assistance in researching the records of the churches in South Florida. The unselfishness of the Overseer of District 1, covering most of Miami-Dade County, Bp. Noward Dean in helping with vital historic data which proved invaluable to the process. It is my hope that this interaction will result in him documenting the vast information he has acquired over his many years as an administrator of the area. So too was the interest of the Overseer of District 3, covering Palm Beach County, Bp. Jeffrey Webb who proved instrumental in ensuring that the churches in his District participated in the survey. Both Overseers demonstrated their interest and their understanding of the significance of this study by the promptness of their responses to emails, telephone calls and text messages.

None of this would be possible without the full co-operation of the ministry team of Love Fellowship, to whom I am eternally indebted, and especially Associate Pastor Karen Clarke who ensured that my absence did not in any way compromise the work of the church to our constituency and the wider community it serves. Special thanks also to Margaret Whibley, who assisted with the editing and formatting of this, the finished product. To all, a big thank you.

## ABSTRACT

The impact of migration from the Bahamas and Jamaica on the Church of God of Prophecy in the counties of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach in Florida is reflected in its composition. The congregants are Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Americans. The churches are small, even as many denominational and independent churches are growing. This dissertation argues that the present lopsided membership composition and anemic growth can be reversed through training in cross-cultural urban ministry, and intentional outreach to unchurched people across culture and ethnicity. This study provides a clear strategy for achieving this goal which will undoubtedly increase the impact of the church in the diverse communities it serves.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

### **Introduction**

Central to every Christian church is the imperative to reach and win people for the Kingdom of God and by extension for their congregations. This mandate can be expressed in many different ways, based on the specific group's biblical and theological understanding, which of course also determines the administrative and operational framework it employs. This framework then informs the polity, structure and emphases, and most definitely the cadre of personnel chosen to drive that philosophy. Hence approaches to evangelism and church growth vary from one denomination to the next, while all are striving for the same goal.

The Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) in South Florida is no exception. Its Wesleyan/Holiness Pentecostal orientation, its base in the once-segregated south, and the predominantly black Baptist influence in this geographical area, has presented and continues to present challenges to outreach and church growth. The fact that the earliest church planters of the movement were island people from the Bahamas and later Jamaica did not help either. The added burden of cultural orientation presented another hurdle to be overcome. The ending of legal segregation under the Jim Crow law in 1955 did not have an immediate effect on the organizational structure of the church, as blacks and whites continued to worship in separate settings as late as 1967. The Jamaicans coming into the country in the 1960s lacked knowledge of race relations and were therefore unable to empathize with their African American and Bahamian brothers who were at the forefront of the "fight" for equality. They were thus viewed with some suspicion, making

it more difficult for them to evangelize in the host community. The isolationist tendencies of COGOP followers, based on the church's ecclesiology of exclusivity, its strong eschatological expectation, and general apathy towards social justice, made their message less appealing to the marginalized masses, despite the fact that Pentecostal messaging was attractive to these individuals.

The continuation of separate worship gatherings based on race after 1967 is a reflection of the reluctance of the COGOP to confront and be fully engaged with its constituency in working through difficult issues. The names used to identify each convention, held purely on the base of race, were disingenuous. Conveniently calling them the North and South conventions was a veiled attempt not to state the obvious, as all the churches listed in the Convention Program for the North Florida Convention were white dominated and pastored. The northern convention included white churches from as far south as Key West, the southernmost point of the continental United States. Similarly, the South Florida convention took in all black churches, including those in the north.

### **Purpose of the Thesis-Project**

This thesis-project is a study of the impact of migration from the Bahamas and Jamaica on the Church of God of Prophecy in South Florida, 1967 – 2017. It is safe to say that without these groups there would not be much left that could be identified as a church. The fact that these two groups constitute the backbone of the leadership of the movement and the vast majority of the membership, should be of some concern to the leadership of the Church of God of Prophecy, given that it is having no success in penetrating the multiplicity of other ethnic groups in a very diverse South Florida.

It is the aim of this thesis-project to provide a plan for cross-cultural ministry leading to a more diverse community within the COGOP in South Florida. It is also hoped that this will serve as a motivation for other scholarly work on other aspects of the COGOP as it strives to shed the image of being anti-intellectual, cultic and insular. To do so, the COGOP must shoulder responsibility for creating a workable framework in which:

1. It will be strategic in its approach to church planting and church growth.
2. Cross cultural training is provided to persons involved in planting churches so that they will be better equipped to lead diverse congregations.
3. Dialogue is encouraged among its leaders and congregants on the role of race and culture in missions and church planting. This should include the controversial issue of encouraging homogenous churches, especially in light of the demise of Caucasian churches.
4. The cycle of unplanned, self-motivated church planting endeavors, borne out of conflicts and schisms become a thing of the past.
5. The church's budget reflects its greatest and most important task of winning souls.
6. Leaders of local churches are sufficiently trained to adapt to the notion of sending out church planting teams aimed at multiplication and church growth in order to spread "the knowledge and glory of the true God over the whole earth."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 74.

## **The Research Questions**

*The Primary Question:* This study will answer the following question: What has contributed to the dominance of Bahamians and Jamaicans in the growth of the English-speaking congregations of the COGOP in South Florida?

*Secondary Question:* What are the contributory factors behind the anemic growth of COGOP congregations in South Florida?

*Tertiary Question:* What are the challenges to the growth and development of COGOP congregations in South Florida?

## **Thesis**

The present lopsided membership composition of the Church of God of Prophecy in South Florida can be reversed through intentional and strategic outreach to unchurched individuals from other nationalities and people groups. This approach will not only correct the present imbalance, but will result in exponential growth in church membership. The late Donald McGavran advocated missionary endeavors among people who are most responsive to the gospel, while insisting that “no people group should be left without a witness for Christ.”<sup>2</sup> This truth seems to have eluded the leadership of the COGOP, which remains uncommitted to targeted witnessing to people it does not currently attract to its fellowship.

The COGOP must also take a principled stance regarding the issue of racially homogenous churches without fear of being labeled racist or of losing members. If it is willing to do so on the basis of language, then it should go further and acknowledge that there are cultural differences that affect the ability of people of different races to come

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<sup>2</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 71.

together for worship. If McGavran is correct, “people movements result from the joint decision of a number of individuals all from the people group, which enables them to become Christians without social dislocation.”<sup>3</sup> Ott and Wilson agree that McGavran’s position is controversial, but recognize some validity in his position. The COGOP could minimize the controversy by dialoguing with its churches, especially its black churches, and accepting responsibility for educating its white constituency on racial tolerance and diversity, thereby helping prepare them to receive people “from every nation, tribe, people and language.”

At a Pastor’s Conference in Albany, New York, in the early 2000s, the author was confronted with this reality through a discussion with a Caucasian COGOP pastor, Pat Bona, from New Hampshire. She explained that she no longer encouraged her congregants to attend their regional convention in New York because they were finding it extremely difficult to be a part of the up-tempo worship style of the Caribbean dominated convention. She also addressed the issue of the strong Caribbean accent and the high-pitched preaching she believed was a deterrent to the effective communication of the gospel across national and cultural barriers. The silence on the issue of race within the COGOP is deafening and does not encourage healthy relationships. Florida has not distinguished itself in this regard and its myopic attitude renders South Florida and other urban centers insular in their outreach efforts.

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<sup>3</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 223.



## **History of the COGOP in South Florida**

The Church of God of Prophecy in South Florida is a network of small Pentecostal churches associated with the international fellowship of the Churches of God of Prophecy, headquartered in Cleveland, TN. The membership of these churches is comprised primarily of immigrants or descendants of immigrants from the Caribbean, and Central and South America, especially the islands of the Bahamas and Jamaica. While the French Creole-speaking Haitian members form part of the administrative jurisdiction of Florida, this study will concern itself with the English-speaking constituency only. The Latin congregations of the states in South Eastern United States fall under a separate administrative jurisdiction with their own Administrative Bishop.

Tracing its beginnings to the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina in 1903, the church was established initially as the Church of God, and was rooted in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. From its early beginnings, it adopted a very aggressive approach to evangelism, led by the founder of the movement, Ambrose J. Tomlinson.

The group had but one way to move...forward! To do so the commanding channel was through fiery, dynamic evangelism. Ministers were few among them but the call of God dominated their lives while gospel fire burned in their souls. With little or no secular or religious training, and no knowledge of homiletics, elocution or pulpit oratory these fiery preachers moved by the fear and power of God set the fields afire, and left in the wake of their departure revival fires ablaze with personal conviction and the vicinity astir with godliness. So powerful was the impact of their presence that no neighborhood they visited seemed the same any more after they had gone. Fiery evangelism was the key to their progress and advancement.<sup>4</sup>

By 1908 Tomlinson and the movement were to be influenced by the Pentecostal message coming out of the 1906 Revival in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California. This revival under the leadership of African American, William Seymour of the Apostolic

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<sup>4</sup> C.T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, Vol. 1 (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1973), 338.

Faith Mission, promulgated the teaching of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the physical evidence of this baptism being “speaking in tongues” or another language not usually known to the individuals. After exposure to this teaching, Tomlinson received the baptism on January 13, 1908.<sup>5</sup> His group embraced the new message of glossolalia manifestations as evidence of the Spirit’s baptism, and they saw this as the continuation of events that occurred in the Book of Acts, and something that was promised to all believers. They also recognized the phenomena as the impetus for aggressive evangelism.

This change in pneumatological understanding was to have a profound impact on the group and indeed the entire Pentecostal movement. They took the commission of Jesus literally, going wherever it was possible to go in order to spread the gospel. This activity was of course bolstered by the Lukan narrative of the Lord’s direct orders that the early Christians were not to embark on their single most important mission of spreading the gospel until they received the gift of the Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Church of God, the name by which the group went at that time, “regarded world evangelism as its mission,” and started a process of organizing a department to oversee this ministry.<sup>6</sup>

Tomlinson was retained as the leader of the church under the title of General Overseer. He was very active in the evangelistic thrust of the church, spending extended time in Camp Meetings in new regions he was trying to reach with the Pentecostal message. “Driven by a vision for world evangelization, Tomlinson organized the ‘Pentecostal World-Wide Mission Band,’ consisting of preachers and musicians who

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<sup>5</sup> A J. Tomlinson, Hector Ortiz, and Adrian L. Varlack, *Diary of A. J. Tomlinson, 1901-1924*, Vol. 5 of *The Church of God Movement Heritage Series*, (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2012), 124.

<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God, 1886-1996*, special tribute ed. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2008), 181-183.

were dedicated to the purpose of the new organization.”<sup>7</sup> One such state was Florida, where he spent extended periods in revivals in the north and west. It was in the Tampa area that the first Church of God was established on May 17, 1909.<sup>8</sup> Two families were impacted by those revival meetings and were to have a profound and lasting influence on the mission endeavors of the Church of God. These were Bahamians, Edmond and Rebecca Barr, and their white counterparts, R.M. and Ida Evans.

All four received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and joined the Church of God. Evans, a retired Methodist minister, joined on October 14, 1909.<sup>9</sup> That same year, with no mission support, he contributed to the Barr’s trip back to the Bahamas in response to the burden they all felt to take the gospel to that country. He would later sell his house to facilitate his mission to the Bahamas, arriving there on January 4, 1910.<sup>10</sup> The Bahamas became the first mission post of the Church of God outside of the United States. The missionary outreach to the Bahamas was to extend from New Providence, home to the Bahamas capital, to the “outer” islands, later called the family islands.

This development was to have even greater significance for the reach of the Church of God in the South Florida region, since Barr would return to Florida to organize the first church in the city of Miami.<sup>11</sup> This relentless push to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth was sustained by Tomlinson and his fledgling movement until 1923, when they underwent some upheaval that led to a major schism. The result was a split that saw

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<sup>7</sup> Wade H. Phillips, *Quest to Restore God’s House: A Theological History of the Church of God, Vol I, 1886-1923*, R.G. Spurling to A. J. Tomlinson (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014), 254.

<sup>8</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 113.

<sup>9</sup> Tomlinson, Ortiz, and Varlack, *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson, 1901-1924*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 130.

<sup>11</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 150.

Tomlinson deposed as General Overseer of the Church of God. This did not deter him and those who remained with him. They re-organized as the smaller of the two factions and both continue to operate to this day, with headquarters located in the city of Cleveland, Tennessee, in close proximity to one other. The larger group remains the Church of God, while Tomlinson's group evolved into the Church of God of Prophecy, following several court hearings that resulted in the naming of the group.

Tomlinson's desire to remain faithful to the biblical mandate to take the gospel to the ends of the earth was unquenchable. Regaining lost ground in regions where he had gone earlier and exploring new frontiers was a passion that did not diminish. His chief motivation was the belief that the church was the Church of God of the Bible and that the schism was the result of an effort to move the "church" away from theocratic government. He never wavered in his conviction and what he lost in numbers and popular support served only to energize him as he remained motivated to spread the gospel. The size of Tomlinson's group at the time of the split is unknown, but size was not a deterrent to its activities.

### **The South Comes of Age**

Negative consequences of the schism of 1923 included the discontinuation of a pluralistic leadership and the appearance of a written constitution. Tomlinson's brand of theocracy had little or no room for broad-based leadership. Decision-making was the purview of administrative heads, at the international, national or local levels. The church's theology promoted a lifestyle of holiness characterized by the mode of dress of its members. The wearing of jewelry, including a wedding band was strictly prohibited.

Its strict stance on divorce and remarriage were other distinguishing qualities that made the movement extremely unpopular with locals, who were already influenced by a “brand” of Christianity that was far more liberal and more holistic. The church’s cadre of ministers had no formal theological training and many had little formal education. To compound the issue, the islanders involved in planting and leading the COGOP congregations lacked the capacity to properly understand the communities in which the churches were established and were reduced to doing evangelistic outreach among their own people, preparing everyone for the return of the Lord. The social component of the gospel was overlooked, as they were deeply suspicious of groups who made mercy ministry an integral part of their offerings.

In being true to its roots, the COGOP in Florida remained a fringe movement and was therefore unattractive to the locals, black or white. Blacks gravitated towards the black Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches, some on theological grounds, and others on the vexing and historically divisive grounds of racism. Blacks who readily accepted the Pentecostal message opted to be a part of the Church of God in Christ as they saw the Church of God of Prophecy as a white man’s church, because of its leadership structure. This was unfortunate, given the fact that Barr was licensed as the first black minister in 1909 and ordained as a bishop in 1912. Conn maintains that in those days there was no mention of race and he rightfully dubs the first missionary endeavor “an interracial venture.”<sup>12</sup>

The Caucasian membership of the church in this region was never large. In 1967 there were only four such congregations, one in Miami-Dade and three in Palm Beach

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<sup>12</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 150.

County. The West Palm Beach congregation, with just under one hundred members and the largest at that time, is now disbanded.<sup>13</sup> The Miami church is now pastored by a Jamaican and the congregation is predominantly Jamaican, with a sprinkling of African Bahamians or people of Bahamian descent. The Pahokee church is pastored by a Jamaican and the congregation is Jamaican. The Riviera Beach church is pastored by a Caucasian and the small congregation, which is diverse, is becoming increasingly Jamaican.

### **Organizing for Growth**

There is no meaningful plan on the part of the church to address the imbalances that exist. Intentionality is lacking in relation to deliberate plans targeting the various people groups in the English-speaking communities. The Haitian and Hispanic communities, as previously mentioned, are exceptions, as they are encouraged and even supported by the general church in reaching their people. The present structure of the Church of God of Prophecy in the State of Florida, which has administrative jurisdiction over South Florida, does not lend itself to assisting churches in this region to effectively canvas what has long been one of the most diverse communities of North America. The North American church has responded to the growing Latin population in South Florida by appointing an overseer who supervises nine states, and no missionary or church planter. Furthermore, the state has no immediate plans to canvas that community. Effectively, the COGOP in South Florida is deliberately winning only non-Hispanic black people to the Kingdom of God, Jamaicans and Bahamians in particular. Even with

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Pastor Barbara Lyn, a second generation pastor, her father having served as a pastor and District Overseer. Interview conducted on March 4, 2017.

their declining population (see Table 1) whites still represent a healthy 40.4 percent and 57.6 percent of the estimated populations of Broward and Palm Beach counties respectively.

Table 1. Estimated Population Miami-Dade, Broward & Palm Beach 2015

	<b>Miami - Dade</b>	<b>Broward</b>	<b>Palm Beach</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Est. 2015	Est. 2015	Est. 2015	2015 Est
Total Population	2,639,733	1,843,152	1,378,806	5,861,691
Whites	398,700(15.1%)	744,254(40.4%)	794,678(57.6)	1,937,632
Black	494,590(16.8%)	495,666(26.9%)	241,488(17.5%)	1,231,744
Hispanics	1,731,733(65.6%)	496,991(27%)	280,872(20.4%)	2,509,596

Source: US Census Dept.

[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk), accessed May 30, 2017

### **The Geographical Setting**

The setting for this study is the geographical region commonly called South Florida, which covers the south eastern seaboard counties of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach. It is to be noted that Monroe County, which forms a part of the South Florida landscape, is not included, since the COGOP only has one church in that county and that church is a French Creole-speaking Haitian congregation. This study will concern itself with the growth and development of the COGOP within the English-speaking congregations in these three counties.

## Patterns of Migration

Population growth in south-east Florida is dominated by migration from Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. “In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Bahamas provided the main black labor force which built the City of Miami and was responsible for the expansion of agrarian capitalism in South Florida.”<sup>14</sup> The need for a steady labor force from the Bahamas became more acute in World War I when Floridians went off to the war leaving their farms without adequate farm hands. “Between 1943 and 1965 a total of more than 30,000 Bahamians left their island homes to work as migrant workers in the United States. They worked under the terms of an international agreement that is still remembered today as “The Contract.”<sup>15</sup>

Pre-independence Jamaica had a migration pattern dominated by the 1951 to July 1962 entry of its citizens into the United Kingdom, “the first large scale entry of colored people into Britain.”<sup>16</sup> This ended with the enactment of the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962.<sup>17</sup> It was during this period that many Jamaicans also migrated to Costa Rica and Panama to work on the railroad canal project. Mass entry into the United States was through the Guest (Farm) Workers’ program, which accommodated many Bahamians. Jamaicans were ideally suited for the sugar cane plantations, given their extensive involvement in that industry in their own country. In an unsophisticated way and with

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<sup>14</sup> Howard Johnson, “Bahamian Labor Migration to Florida in the late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Centuries: A Paper Presented at the South/South Conference, Sponsored by the Canadian Association of African Studies and the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies” (Montreal: McGill University). Undated article accessed from the library of the University of the Bahamas.

<sup>15</sup> Keith L. Tinker, *The Bahamas in American History* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corp, 2011), 133-145.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford Hill, *West Indian Migrants and the London Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, *West Indian Migrants and the London Churches*, 79.



their usual indomitable spirit, the Jamaicans engaged in a missionary movement from that island to vast segments of the world.<sup>18</sup> The COGOP benefitted from this pioneering spirit in Panama, Costa Rica, Britain and finally, the United States.

As noted earlier, the COGOP came into this geographical region through a Bahamian church planter, Edmond Barr, and subsequent congregations were planted by other immigrants from that country. By 1967, the total number of churches across the region stood at twenty-one, of which 4 were 100 percent Caucasian, pastored by Caucasians. The remaining 15 were pastored by Bahamians. There were 12 congregations in Miami-Dade County, one of which was white; 4 in Broward County, all black, and 5 in Palm Beach County, three of which were white congregations. Generally speaking, the congregations of the COGOP in South Florida do not reflect the ethnic mix of the region.

After 1967, it was the Jamaicans who were to have the greatest impact on the growth in the number of COGOP congregations as the migration patterns began to shift. The Goulds church was planted by a Jamaican in the 1980s, the only church planted by a Jamaican in Miami-Dade County. The only other church added after 1967 was an independent church that sought and gained affiliation some five years ago. During this period four all-black churches—Coconut Grove, Allapattah, Liberty City and Miami No.2—were disbanded. Broward added six congregations over the period. Three of these were planted by Jamaicans and the congregations are predominantly Jamaicans. One was organized by a Bahamian, but the congregation is almost one hundred percent Jamaican. The other was organized by an African American who pastored it until his retirement

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<sup>18</sup> Lloyd A. Cooke, *The Story of Jamaican Missions: How the Gospel Went from Jamaica to the World* (Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak, 2013), 225-575.

almost five years ago when a Jamaican assumed the pastorate. The congregation is dominated by Jamaicans. Palm Beach had the largest number of churches added over the period. Eight churches were added, all by Jamaicans, and the congregations are all dominated by Jamaicans.

The net gain of nine congregations or 42.85 percent over the past fifty years pushes the total number of congregations to thirty across the three counties. Four or 13.33 percent are pastored by Bahamians or persons of Bahamian descent, eighteen or 60 percent by Jamaicans or persons of Jamaican descent, six or 20 percent by African Americans, while Caucasian and Turk and Caicos have one each or 3 percent each. The survey helps to establish a more accurate picture of the extent to which these two nationalities have contributed to the growth and development of the COGOP in the region beyond pastoral leadership.

From the 1967 convention programs, we know that there was only one Caucasian congregation in Miami-Dade.<sup>19</sup> That congregation is now a black church pastored by a Jamaican with a predominantly Jamaican congregation. Of the three Caucasian congregations that were functional in Palm Beach County in 1967, only one, the Riviera Beach church, remains functional, but it is now a diverse congregation. The pastor is Caucasian and the congregation has a growing Jamaican population. There is no other local church with a diverse racial mix and there is no policy or expressed desire to address this shortcoming. Of the other two, only the Pahokee church remains open, and like the Miami church, it is pastored by a Jamaican and the congregation is made up of

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<sup>19</sup> Church of God of Prophecy, Convention Program for South and North Florida, June 21-25 and July 20-23, 1967, held at Miami and Ocoee, Florida respectively.

Jamaicans, the majority of whom came to the United States through the Guest Worker Program to work in the sugar industry.

Unfortunately, there are no statistical data for these churches as they were in 1967 to facilitate a meaningful comparison. There is, however, enough evidence to support the reality of a shift from a strong Bahamian influence to the Jamaicans, especially as it relates to the establishment of new church plants. This trend was the result of changing migration patterns from Jamaica and the Bahamas. With declining numbers allowed to enter the United Kingdom, post-independence Jamaica turned to the United States, and to South Florida especially, given its proximity. That country was also to provide much of the skilled labor force for the sugar estates of South Florida under the United States Guest Worker (Farm Work) program. Jamaica's flirtation with socialism in the 1970s triggered an even greater number of migrants from that country, most of whom would settle in the Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Meanwhile, the strength of the Bahamian economy meant there was less need for Bahamians to seek employment in Florida.

Leadership at the district level in Miami Dade and Broward was always provided by Bahamians or persons of Bahamian descent. Palm Beach County was led by a Caucasian until 1991, when a Jamaican replaced him. Some five years ago this individual left the church and was replaced by another Jamaican. District Overseers are rarely moved and serve until they are ready for retirement.

### **Limitations of the Thesis-Project.**

The study is limited by a number of factors outside of the researcher's control. The most poignant of these is the inadequacy of data compiled and saved by the church at

the administrative and local levels. There is no statistical data for the beginning of the period being studied and this makes a comparative study impossible. Irregular reporting from the field also poses some difficulties for the collection of accurate data for the current year. Some figures are derived from reports dated 2016 and there are still a few for which there is no recent data.

The current reporting format for ministers and church does not lend itself to a detailed demographic breakdown of membership in each congregation, and hence the Administrative office does not have the capability to provide these details. Additionally, there is no recorded history of the ministry in the state of Florida and neither is there any for any of the local churches, hence there is no printed record to assist with a comprehensive study of the movement.

### **Challenges to Growth**

The State Office of the Church of God of Prophecy, Florida, has appointed a lone church planter who is Jamaican. He also serves as a pastor and overseer of the Palm Beach District. This renders him ineffective in devising and executing meaningful strategies for planting growing churches across the state on two fronts: his nationality and the amount of work he is already doing. In fact, his appointment to that office was a mere recognition of the work he had undertaken to grow the number of churches in his district. He has no formal training in church planting.

Formerly, evangelizing a region was a core function of District Overseers. Unfortunately, the role of District Overseer has become less clearly defined over the years at the international level, and their only mention in the official policy manual of the

church is that they are appointed by State/National/Regional Overseers.<sup>20</sup> Without a formal designation for evangelizing their areas, as was previously the case, the Overseer is left only to plan a convention for the churches of his region or any other event which might enhance fellowship. The districts could be better utilized promoting effective “Team Ministries” to canvas large areas, planning summer youth missions targeting cities/communities, and conducting city-wide mass evangelistic crusades, especially in communities where there are already-established churches that are struggling. District churches could overcome selfishness and pool their resources to provide social services to inner city communities and thereby improve their impact.

Local churches are reduced to internal-reach through fellowship meetings and the annual convention, neither of which will ever lead to growth. Growth among COGOP congregations is anemic and is primarily biological, although even this is threatened as third and fourth generation COGOP youth move on and become involved with other ministries, given the lack of vibrancy within their local congregations.

The COGOP in Florida does not have a Director of Evangelism and/or Outreach to assist these small churches with logistics, planning and training. Neither does it have a clearly defined protocol for planting new churches, nor is there any special funding set up to undertake this endeavor. Church planting is left up to individuals, and the result is often untidy, as people possessing a Minister’s License, which authorizes them to plant churches, and who, for whatever reason, become disenchanted with the leadership, simply leave their local church to “start a work.”

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<sup>20</sup> DeWayne Hamby, ed. *Ministry Policy Manual of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2015), 31.

Most attempts to plant a new church are often carried out in violation of the most basic biblical principles of conflict resolution and church discipline (Matt 5:23-25 and 18:15-17), on the grounds that they are done in response to the “call of God.” The uninitiated church planter, lacking a well-trained team and with limited financial resources, attempts to plant a church using a school room, rented commercial space or a hotel. With no proper structure and no institutional support, these congregations often remain small. Growth is often at the expense of other COGOP congregations, instead of through winning the unchurched. This splintering is intensified, as the State Overseer, who has the sole responsibility for approving the new church start up, may acquiesce and acknowledge the new grouping as a local church.<sup>21</sup> The District Overseer is then left to try and build a fellowship that is inclusive of these new plants, but without authority over them, and with a myriad of unresolved issues. The very concept of district oversight becomes dysfunctional as congregations find it difficult to be fully immersed in genuine fellowship, and rather than experiencing camaraderie, fall into competition with each trying to outdo the other.

The policy shift from a strong central government in the mid-1980s—returning resources and a greater sense of independence to the local churches—may have contributed to the lack of true fellowship and may even have stymied growth. The international offices no longer employ and deploy people with developed expertise in specialized ministries, i.e., people who formerly helped these small churches. Lacking critical resources, these small congregations are unable to effectively train personnel and fund mission activities aimed at reaching the unchurched. A good example of this is the outreach to the youth population through Youth Life and Mission Teams, which were

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<sup>21</sup> Hamby, *Ministry Policy Manual of the Church of God of Prophecy*, 38.

formerly used to prepare young people to share the gospel, to do evangelism, and undertake short term mission trips nationally and internationally. Certainly, the youth population would be the most likely to positively impact any attempt to build diverse congregations, since young people are more likely to integrate than adults already steeped in their traditions.

Another policy shift made with the stated goal of building stronger and bigger congregations was the appointment of pastors for indefinite tenures. This is not being realized, however. To achieve this goal, the church must be willing to evaluate pastors at the administrative level, using this evaluation to assess their suitability to continue in their positions. The monthly reporting system is presently geared towards the recording of finances and is not used as a management tool. Changes to this instrument could prove invaluable to those administrators willing to provide institutional support to overcome barriers to growth, or to take the tough decisions necessary to move non-performing pastors from congregations that are not growing. The stewardship of some leaders is questionable and there is no sanction for non-performance or lack of accountability. This is also a reflection of the disorganization which abounds in local churches, demonstrating that there is no structure in place to support growth.

In addition to the effect of these policy shifts, it must be admitted that the immigrant church planters were also ill-prepared to minister to persons not of their own nationality. Most were under-prepared, educationally, theologically and socially. Some of them, from rural Third World settings, who came to the United States to work as harvesters on Florida farms, soon found themselves faced with the prospect of leading and growing churches in urban settings, a task for which they were unprepared. The

present system does not make a distinction between church planters and pastors, and so persons who plant churches automatically assume that they will pastor the new church. The church does not have a system dedicated to providing specialized training to these individuals in the area of urban and cross-cultural ministry in-house.

Most persons who obtain a Minister's License are not motivated to get involved in additional studies and the state of Florida is very slow in preparing and offering advanced studies through the Leadership Development Institute of the International Office. The Florida COGOP has been slow in promoting the accredited training opportunities offered by the church through consortium arrangements forged with two recognized seminaries. Generally speaking, there is no appetite for formal training among leadership. One member of the consortium is currently operating from a center in Miami, but only two pastors from the entire state are enrolled, one of whom is from the South Florida area.

The COGOP must take the matter of ministerial formation through theological education seriously and insist that candidates for church planting and pastoral ministry have the competence to minister outside of their narrow racial or cultural backgrounds. The "called" must be encouraged to prepare themselves adequately for the fight for the souls of men/women. To achieve this, the church must review its current list of Ministerial Competencies and make formal training of all ministers mandatory if it is to maintain members and attract new ones.<sup>22</sup> This seems consistent with biblical examples, as in the Old Testament school of the prophets. Furthermore, the disciples spent years

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<sup>22</sup> Hamby, ed. *Ministry Policy Manual of the Church of God of Prophecy*, 71-75.



been taught by the Messiah, allowing them to practice their learning during their apprenticeship period.

The Church of God of Prophecy must reclaim the missional mindset of its founder, A.J. Tomlinson, who despite his position as General Overseer of the church, spent weeks at a time away from home and office, preaching the gospel and setting churches in order wherever he went.<sup>23</sup> Those who lead must embrace the vision of the earlier settlers from the islands, who, despite coming to the United States for a better life, were equally mindful of the need to present Christ to the people who were yet unchurched. They heeded the encouragement of Paul to Timothy: “Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, and do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5), and resisted the executive mindset that often obtains among the ranks of the ordained clergy. Motivation for ministry must be re-evaluated and priorities must be re-ordered to ensure growing churches.

## **Overview**

The remainder of the thesis-project has the following format:

Literature Review (Chapter Two). This chapter is a critical review of literature containing pertinent information on the growth and development of the COGOP in South Florida, including scholarly or historic documentation of the work of the church in the area. Given the antecedents to this study, it is crucial that meaningful research be done on migration trends from both the Bahamas and Jamaica, looking at the people, their dates and the ministries these people started or led.

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<sup>23</sup> Tomlinson, Ortiz, and Varlack, *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson, 1901-1924*, 124.

Additionally, the literature review covers research into works of renowned missiologists on the fundamental principles for success in mounting an effective missional presence in the community. The research takes an in-depth look at the methods prescribed for planting churches that will grow. The scope of this investigation encompasses a thorough investigation of those elements the experts believe are vital to growing strong churches. This is significant, since the COGOP in South Florida is not lacking in numbers of church plants, but they do not do well in growing them. While the Barna “State of the Church” report for 2016 concedes that 46 percent of Americans attend churches of under one hundred members and 37 percent attend churches of between a hundred and 499 members,<sup>24</sup> only six COGOP congregations in South Florida are classified as medium-sized or as having in excess of a hundred members, and none have more than five-hundred members. This is disconcerting when one takes into account the time the church has operated in some of these cities. The largest church within the network is predominantly Jamaican and has 240 members.

The literature demonstrates the extent to which the COGOP needs to revisit its approach to church planting and development. The tried and proven methods highlighted by these experts demonstrate that growth will only be achieved as the movement embraces Holy Spirit leadership rather than self-willed gratification in planning and executing new church plants and pastoral assignments. The issue of personnel development and the provision of adequate resources for travel, meeting spaces, equipment and transportation are unquestionably non-negotiable if a new church is to be planted successfully.

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24. Barna Group, “The State of the Church, 2016,” accessed May 25, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016>.

Biblical and Theological Framework (Chapter 3): In order to fully understand the nature of the issue, Chapter 3 of the thesis-project deals with the biblical and theological framework for planting and growing churches. Migration is not a new phenomenon, as the Bible contains stories of migration being used by God to bring his story to a people who have not heard it before. No doubt this is the act of a Sovereign God under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit. The biblical review also covers the role the Holy Spirit played in the early church growth movement in the Book of Acts and how this model has been interpreted and adopted by the COGOP.

There are two branches of theology that probably had the greatest influence on COGOP mission activity during its formative years. First was that the denomination placed great emphasis on the church being the true church. Second was the strong emphasis on eschatological expectation as one of the pillars of the Pentecostal “five-fold or full gospel.”<sup>25</sup> Both of these trends motivated early adherents of the Church of God to preach the gospel to every creature and to make the church known before the imminent return of the Jesus. The full implication of the Pentecostal understanding of what this entails is explored, as well as the impact this may have had on the evangelistic zeal of the movement since the change in the church’s ecclesiological position. The theological development of Pentecostalism and how this development may now be altering the missional outlook of its members, especially its younger members, will also be examined.

Project Design (Chapter Four): Given the significant role both national groups—Jamaicans and Bahamians—play in the life of the church, in addition to the review of relevant literature, the thesis-project includes interviews conducted with individuals

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<sup>25</sup> Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 1.

within and outside the church. The interviews are carried out to ascertain vital information about the people who have contributed to the growth of the movement. These interviewees include the State Overseer and his staff, who are vital to the gathering of statistical and historical data on the churches and personnel in the region during the period. Given the limited number of written accounts it is imperative that the interviewees should include the District Overseers in the three counties involved, along with older pastors and older members, especially those who were charter members of individual congregations. To make this exercise successful, a basic questionnaire was provided to each pastor/local church to gather pertinent information covering the period under review.

Outcomes and Conclusions\_(Chapter Five): The significant contributions of the Bahamians and the Jamaicans to the ministry has resulted in a church that has become complacent. In its immaturity it accepts the mere planting of a church as fulfillment of the scriptural mandate to go and preach and does little or nothing more. It is hoped that this thesis-project will stimulate further discussion and research on the way forward and help Jamaican and Bahamian pastors transition their ministries from their Third World rural experience to that which the general population of South Florida has come to expect of their churches. It is further hoped that the thesis-project will address some of the challenges to growth and development in the Church of God of Prophecy in South Florida.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In his book, *Unstoppable Force*, Erwin McManus observes that “people move all the time and of course, what that means on a communal level is that neighborhoods are constantly changing.”<sup>1</sup> He makes a new call to cross-cultural ministry, instead of the traditional American view of missions, i.e., giving to and praying for those who will “go.” South Florida is a significant reflection of this need for cross-cultural ministry, as this region now has immigrants as its population majority.

Much of the Christian community, the Church of God of Prophecy, South Florida, not exempted, has not awakened to this new reality. Instead, they continue to operate under the old paradigm. Robert Quinn is correct when he asserts that, “[o]rganizational cultures are not designed; they tend to evolve naturally. At any given time, the culture will facilitate certain desired outcomes and block others.”<sup>2</sup> What Paul Borthwick identifies as the “Great Migration” in *Western Christians in Global Mission* “is providing new opportunities: first to reach out to those who have never heard the gospel and second to join with Christian immigrants as they help us reach our nation.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had In Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within You* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission: What’s the Role of the Church in North America?* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 41.

## The People Who Came

The COGOP in South Florida is a beneficiary of this people movement, much of which has come from the Bahamas and Jamaica. The association of the Bahamas and the United States dates back to the sixteenth century; while in the eighteenth century the Bahamas figured prominently in the American Revolutionary War, serving as a sanctuary for British troops. Later it would similarly become a place of refuge for Native Americans and African slaves fleeing plantation life in the United States.

Bahamians also played a crucial role in the development of the fishing industry in Key West and later migrated north to Miami. Bahamian historian Keith Tinker notes that, “By 1920, approximately 5,000 Bahamian immigrants comprised 52% of the black communities of Miami and an estimated 16% of the entire population of the city.”<sup>4</sup> He adds that at that time they “were generally tagged by Miami whites as troublemakers and instigators of racial tension.”<sup>5</sup> The Bahamian/U.S. connection was to have far-reaching implications for the religious life of both nations. Noted Caribbean historian, Michael Craton, in looking at the contribution of the Church to the early development of the Bahamas, points out that the “new wave of popular black religion [that] came to the Bahamas from the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century...struck a chord and fulfilled a need among the poorest and most downtrodden blacks.”<sup>6</sup> In *Islanders in the Stream*, he recognizes the “‘African Methodist Episcopal or ‘Shouter’ church—a forerunner of the many later Holiness, Pentecostal, or ‘Jumper’ churches,

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<sup>4</sup> Keith Tinker, *The Bahamas in American History* (United States: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 125.

<sup>5</sup> Tinker, *The Bahamas in American History*, 126.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 113.

especially the Churches of God of Prophecy.”<sup>7</sup> This was in fact the Church of God, and their mission enterprise of 1909 was led by Edmond and Rebecca Barr as mentioned earlier. Barr and his wife and later his white friend, retired Methodist minister, R.M. Evans, and his wife Ida, along with Carl Padgett, joined forces to establish the first mission for the movement outside of the United States in 1910. Wade Phillips confirms that Tomlinson appointed Evans as a missionary to the Bahamas in 1910, and as Overseer in 1911.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, it was Barr, a Bahamian and the first black minister, who was “licensed in 1909 and ordained bishop on June 3, 1912,”<sup>9</sup> who would return to Florida, this time to establish the first Church of God congregation in Miami, which was now heavily populated with Bahamians. That church continues to exist as the Miami No.1 church, while the second church established in Coconut Grove is closed. These churches were all black churches and there is no record of white churches operating at this time. In *Like a Mighty Army*, Church of God historian, Charles Conn, notes that up until 1920, “there was no record or official note of ethnic distinction—which makes it difficult even now to determine precise dates and names.”<sup>10</sup> Barr himself would serve for a two-year period as the Overseer for the black constituency in 1915, but this was reversed and a single Overseer was appointed to serve all of Florida up until the split of 1923. Oddly enough, today the Church of God in Cleveland, TN has a white as well as a black Overseer

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<sup>7</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 113- 115.

<sup>8</sup> Wade H. Phillips, *Quest to Restore God’s House: A Theological History of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014), 251.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Conn, *Like a Mighty Army: A History of the Church of God 1886-1996* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2008), 150.

<sup>10</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 151.

serving the state of Florida, while its counterpart, Church of God of Prophecy, continues to be served by a single Overseer. There was, however, a practice wherein the state conducted two conventions, one in the north and the other in the south, which were organized purely along racial lines.<sup>11</sup>

The coming of the Jamaicans to South Florida occurred much later, at least in the numbers that the Bahamians were arriving in, and only occurred after the British ended open immigration to its Commonwealth citizens. Migration to the United States was primarily to the north-east up until 1924 when the new immigration laws and the Great Depression put an end to the free flow of visitors.<sup>12</sup> It was after this change in immigration policy by the British, and with the ever-increasing need for cheap labor, that the now independent Jamaica sought and obtained “contracts” for its people.

The island had a large cadre of workers who were already involved in the reaping of sugar cane on the vast estates operated by the British, and many of these were soon drawn to the cane fields of Florida. With the change in the immigration laws allowing family members and skilled workers entry, “the post-1960 stream represented a different sort of migrant to the United States, more students and more professionals than before.”<sup>13</sup> These points are substantiated by the Migration Policy Institute’s Zie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, who observe: “Migration from Jamaica and other former British colonies was driven by immigration restrictions set by the United Kingdom and the simultaneous

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<sup>11</sup> C.T. Davidson, *Upon this Rock* vol. II (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1974), 448.

<sup>12</sup> Franklin McKnight, “A Page in Jamaican Migration History,” *Jamaica Observer*, June 4, 2012, accessed November 2, 2017, [http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/A-page-of-Jamaican-migration-history\\_11586178](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/A-page-of-Jamaican-migration-history_11586178).

<sup>13</sup> McKnight, “A Page in Jamaican Migration History.”



recruitment by the United States of English speaking workers of varying skill levels (from rural laborers in agriculture or construction to nurses).”<sup>14</sup>

The historic records regarding the Church of God movement in Jamaica appear incomplete and distorted. Conn records: “Sometime before the Assembly of 1917, the Church of God took into its organization four churches and eighty members in Jamaica.”<sup>15</sup> Later he alludes to a 1918 start date, and the appointment of an Overseer after the disruption of 1923 and during the Assembly of 1924. It is recorded that the appointee, E. E. Simmons, arrived on the island, “filled with optimism but was unable to find even one of the reported churches.”<sup>16</sup> Church of God of Prophecy historian, C. T Davidson mentions the appointment of a Geo F. Wallace as a missionary in 1923, but there was no further appointment until J. L. Kinder was named as a missionary in 1931. He was followed shortly thereafter by Rudolph C. Smith, a Jamaican, in 1935.<sup>17</sup>

The Bahamas maintained pride of place with Tomlinson. He provides a detailed account of the separation of what is now the COGOP from the Church of God in his diary notes of March 1925. The events coincided with that country’s convention, which was also the first for the first native Overseer, Stanley Ferguson. It was here that the separation took place.<sup>18</sup> Ferguson grew in stature in the church and the history of what we now recognize as the Church of God of Prophecy remains inextricably linked to the

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<sup>14</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, “Caribbean Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, September 14, 2016, accessed November 2, 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/caribbean-immigrants-united-states>.

<sup>15</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Conn, *Like a Mighty Army*, 229.

<sup>17</sup> Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, Vol II, 896.

<sup>18</sup> A J. Tomlinson, Hector Ortiz, and Adrian L. Varlack, *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson, 1925-1943*, vol. 6 of *The Church of God Movement Heritage Series* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2012), 124.

Bahamas. There is another Bahamian institution that shares its history with the Tomlinson movement and indeed the COGOP in South Florida, i.e., the Bahama Brass Band. The band was started in 1925 and its first director was Bishop Hermis Ferguson, an established preacher who ran churches in South Florida.<sup>19</sup> This symbiotic relationship resulted in the development of South Florida's own brass band, the Florida Sunshine Band, which serves the churches in South Florida and indeed the entire state. The composition of the band is predominantly Bahamian and people of Bahamian descent, with a sprinkling of Turks Islanders and Jamaicans.

The coming of both peoples to South Florida was therefore very significant in the growth and development of the fledgling church, with a theological mooring not readily accepted as orthodox, practiced by a people who were never seen as equals in terms of their color and who lacked the financial resources to fund their religious practices adequately. Additionally, the national church lacked the financial resources required to assist the local churches in their mission endeavors, either here or in their homeland. Although not much written record exists, it is safe to say that, notwithstanding all the handicaps, the COGOP was successful in overcoming a major schism, in withstanding the unfortunate circumstances brought on by segregation, and in dealing with the usual interpersonal issues involved in any attempt to bring more than one culture together, as evidenced by the number of churches that had been established by 1967.

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<sup>19</sup> G. Sean Gibson, *The Making of a Band: A History of the World Famous Bahamas Brass Band* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012), 4.

## Setting Sail

Many of the earlier immigrants who formed the backbone of the COGOP in South Florida, from both the Bahamas and Jamaica, were poor rural folks coming to the United States, initially to work on agricultural contracts, and later in construction, nursing, home health care and the service industries. Their integration into the wider American society would present some challenges and Manuel Ortiz's *One New People* lists three of these: local differences, generational/language differences and socio-economic characteristics.<sup>20</sup> They had nevertheless come in a spirit of enterprise and brought with them a distinct spirituality, Pentecostal spirituality, which Eldin Villafañe rightly characterizes in *The Liberating Spirit* as having "its genesis at the 'Azusa Street' (Los Angeles, California) revival in 1906 under the leadership of a black American minister, William J. Seymour."<sup>21</sup> What they brought was however clothed in their respective cultures.

The movement falls within Classical Pentecostalism and its origin is traced to North America and the Wesleyan/Holiness movements. This view has widespread support. In *Pentecostal Spirituality*, Steven Land suggests "the streams of Pietism, Puritanism, Wesleyanism, African-American Christianity, and nineteenth century Holiness-Revivalism form the confluence which has today become a sea of Pentecostal believers."<sup>22</sup> Walter Hollenwegger a leading scholar in Pentecostalism writes in his essay, "Priorities in Pentecostal Research" that Pentecostalism is "a mix between black oral spirituality in the US and Catholic spirituality as it was handed down in the American

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<sup>20</sup> Manuel Ortiz, *One New People*, (Downer's Grove: IL, InterVarsity Press, 1996), 37- 43.

<sup>21</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 85.

<sup>22</sup> Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 37, 43.

Holiness Movement.”<sup>23</sup> He returns to this point again in his major work, *Pentecostalism*, this time claiming: “The mainline churches also criticized the emerging Pentecostal movement, despising the Pentecostals because of their lowly black origins.”<sup>24</sup>

Anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos identifies Jamaica as taking a similar path of Pentecostal development. She makes the point that “like the Pentecostal movement in America, the Jamaican movement was heralded by a theological forerunner: a Holiness church that preached sanctification or ‘holiness’ through the in-filling of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>25</sup>

### **The Strangers in our Midst**

Citing data from the Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey, Zong and Batalova identify the 1960s as the commencement of the rapid growth in migration from the Caribbean. From less than 200,000 in 1960, Caribbean immigration to the United States grew in succeeding decades as follows:

1960s	675,000	248%
1970s	1,300,000	86%
1980s	1,900,000	54%
1990s	3,000,000	52%

Between 2000 and 2014 this figure grew a further 35 percent, reaching 4,000,000 in 2014. Of this number, Jamaica tops the English-speaking Caribbean with approximately 706,000 persons and the Bahamas is responsible for some 32,000. Both

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<sup>23</sup> Walter J. Hollenwegger, “Priorities in Pentecostal Research: Historiography, Missiology, Hermeneutics and Pneumatology,” in *Experiences of the Spirit: Conference on Pentecostal and Charismatic Research in Europe at Ulrich University*, ed. Jan A.B. Jongeneel (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Hollenwegger, *Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 20.

<sup>25</sup> Diane J. Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 97.

nations are the two strongest English-speaking mission fields for the COGOP in the Caribbean. They are both in close proximity to the state of Florida and South Florida in particular. The Bahamas enjoys preferential immigration and customs pre-clearance to the United States at their major ports of entry. Of the four million Caribbean immigrants residing in the United States, according to US Census Data 2010-14, the Miami- Ft. Lauderdale -West Palm Beach metropolitan area was second only to the New York, Pennsylvania metro area with approximately 1,176,000 persons.<sup>26</sup>

The small beginnings mushroomed into what some Americans like to describe as a “major problem” and a threat to their security. Eldin Villafañe in *Seek the Peace of the City*, looks at it differently, seeing the U.S. as “a nation of immigrants,” and remarks that immigrants have “always been among us” and that it is “only recently that we have looked to and affirmed the ‘cultural pluralism’ of our nation.”<sup>27</sup> Borthwick’s understanding that migrating communities are invitations from God has obviously been lost on some Christian communities, much as it has been lost on the rest of American society. Some Christian groups do not accept God’s invitation to minister to immigrant communities, and instead shun them in some cases, or merely “put up” with them in others. The result is, they do not reap the collateral benefits Borthwick mentions in his book. Borthwick gives the example of a church in Illinois that accepted a Ugandan family into their midst. The family, he narrates, “put [the congregation] to shame with their boldness in proclaiming Jesus.”<sup>28</sup> God used the Ugandans to push the congregation

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<sup>26</sup> Zong and Batalova, “Caribbean Immigrants in the United States.”

<sup>27</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 47- 48.

<sup>28</sup> Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission*, 43.

into a greater compassion and ministry for non-believers in their community. For the COGOP, this concept needs to be applied also to the relationship between the local churches planted by immigrants and their administrative jurisdictions. Are the mission endeavors of local churches within their communities recognized as important, and are they provided the kind of support that guarantees that their mission will be successful?

Villafañe contends that there are seven types of churches arising out of the relationships between the dominant “parent” denominational structure and the Hispanic Protestant church, seeking what he calls cultural liberation.<sup>29</sup> Many of these developments and outcomes are the result of a devaluing of these new communities and the various nuances operating among the leadership, along with an over-zealous desire or attempt to Americanize the immigrant community, something Villafañe believes is not possible, since “ethnic distinctions [are] not a desirable or achievable reality for assimilation into the American way of life.”<sup>30</sup> Villafañe maintains that “one’s religious experience is mediated through one’s cultural reality.”<sup>31</sup>

First generation Bahamians and Jamaicans came to South Florida fully adept in their own understanding of life, theology, and church, and they brought the message of that church, the Church of God and later the Church of God of Prophecy, with them. The churches they established were geared primarily to their own people. No record can be found about the time at which the four white congregations that existed in 1967 were planted. What is true, however, is that a golden opportunity was afforded the wider COGOP, to use the immigrant community to evangelize their own people, or at least to

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<sup>29</sup> Villafañe, *Liberating Spirit*, 79-84.

<sup>30</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 48.

<sup>31</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 49.

learn from them and let that translate into a positive attitudinal change towards outreach and soul winning. The extent to which this has happened is open to debate.

The strangers among us were more than just blacks in a predominantly white country; they were foreigners in a first-world country coming from former British territories that were distinctly third-world. The issue was also about foreign blacks seeking to integrate among Afro-Americans, who did not always understand them. Secondly, the Caribbean immigrants themselves lacked a basic knowledge and understanding of African American struggles. Their countries had been emancipated from slavery much earlier than the United States, and they were also accustomed to self-government. In many cases, the problems were not so much issues of race, but issues of class.

### **Navigating the Mission Field**

In the introduction to *Afro-Pentecostalism*, a book they co-edited, Amos Yong and Estrela Y. Alexander examine the marginalization of African-Americans in the United States, showing that there is a clear co-relationship between this marginalization and the significant growth of Pentecostalism among the lower class of the black community.<sup>32</sup> This narrative was to change with time, and Yong and Alexander point out that “the phenomena of the emerging black middle class since the civil rights movement has transformed the shape of the Afro-Pentecostal and Holiness black churches over the last forty years.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Yong, Amos, et al., *Afro-Pentecostalism*, ed. Amos Yong and Estrela Y. Alexander (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Yong et al., *Afro-Pentecostalism*, 6.

David Henderson, author of *Culture Shift*, speaks of the “Self” as the “modifier of choice.” Henderson is of the firm view that “[o]ur brazen pre-occupation with self, ripples through every tributary of our culture.”<sup>34</sup> He makes the salient point that this pre-occupation has resulted in a rise in self-reliance, whereby man wants to “decide for God what is true about him and his intentions for us.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly there is great emphasis on the individual. “More than God, more than community, [the individual] matters most.”<sup>36</sup> In concluding that “self-concern is so much a part of Americans,” he concedes that Americans “have not always been this way.”<sup>37</sup> Stuart Murray sees the result of this as a post-Christian society and concedes that doing missions within this context is not easy.<sup>38</sup> Murray contends that the traditional shape of the church as “the neighborhood church” is outdated and is unable to respond to the complexities of urban centers.<sup>39</sup>

Samuel Escobar advances the discussion further when he observes, “Not only is Christianity itself being rejected in contemporary Western societies, Christian values too are coming under fire.”<sup>40</sup> Walter Brueggemann, in his intriguing volume, *Sabbath as Resistance*, gives his take on the subject by observing that “[t]he production of new and improved,’ the endless advance of style, and the always-new technology make old

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<sup>34</sup> David Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God’s Truth to our Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 97.

<sup>35</sup> Henderson, *Culture Shift*, 97.

<sup>36</sup> Henderson, *Culture Shift*, 97.

<sup>37</sup> Henderson, *Culture Shift*, 97.

<sup>38</sup> Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2001), 120.

<sup>39</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 120.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel From Everywhere to Everyone* (Downer Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 74.



possessions inadequate and incomplete so that there is and must be an open-ended effort to satisfy the gods of commodity.”<sup>41</sup> Escobar sees “in the West, the rise of a culture with attitudes that might be described as postmodern because they revolt against some of the marks of modernity.”<sup>42</sup> He is correct in observing that “[m]issionary obedience at this frontier [the West] is mandatory for evangelical churches and is as urgent as missionary obedience to go to ‘unreached peoples’ in exotic jungles or remote rural areas.”<sup>43</sup>

In his philosophical theology of culture, and in a bid to advance a “high” form of liturgy within the Christian church as a response to the prevailing culture, James Smith paints the world as creating its own liturgy, born out of, and reflecting a desire for the things it loves. In *Desiring the Kingdom*, he argues that the Church is complicit in the growth and development of this culture: “Unfortunately, the Christian response to the liturgies of consumerism is often woefully inadequate, even a sort of parody of the mall. Rather than properly countering the liturgy of consumption, the church ends up mimicking it, merely substituting Christian commodities—‘Jesufied’ versions of worldly products, which are acquired, accumulated, and disposed of to make room for the new and the novel.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 14.

<sup>42</sup> Escobar, *The Global Mission*, 75.

<sup>43</sup> Escobar, *The Global Mission*, 77.

<sup>44</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 103.

Like Smith, Bryan Chapell sees much of what emerging churches do in worship as taking a “consumer approach to worship.”<sup>45</sup> Chapell considers that “the worship of the charismatic renewal movements lost some of its gospel shape and became more distinguished by the emotional flow of service.”<sup>46</sup> Escobar calls this the “ritualization of life,” in which the “search for pleasure has become a mark of contemporary life” and incorporates the “glorification of the body.”<sup>47</sup> While he agrees with Smith about the state of contemporary culture, he differs with both him and Chapell on the response required to counter this state. While expressing caution about the theology of what he calls “apostolic” movements, he makes out a case for some consideration to be given to “their ability to attract unchurched people,” which “poses a missiological question that has to be taken seriously in the post-Christian, postmodern world.”<sup>48</sup> Escobar cautions the evangelical church about its inflexibility and unwillingness to deviate from tradition.

In his book, *Deep Church*, Jim Belcher makes a valiant attempt to explore the viability of such an enterprise. The volume is based on his experiences in planting a Presbyterian church in a culture that is postmodern and therefore not suited to a traditional worship style. He is mature in admitting that even what some would call “low churches” have a liturgy, and he believes there is a third way of doing church. He believes this third way must be rooted in the “traditions” of the church and by tradition he

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<sup>45</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

<sup>46</sup> Chapell, *Christ-centered Worship*, 70.

<sup>47</sup> Escobar, *The Global Mission*, 79.

<sup>48</sup> Escobar, *The Global Mission*, 80.

is referring to those ancient traditions dating back to the patristic period.<sup>49</sup> Belcher is honest in his characterization of the issues, somewhat biased, understandably so, in some of his conclusions, but quite helpful in suggesting that the goal is “not to simply contextualize or become more like the surrounding culture, but to first adopt church tradition that would give them the resources to connect with the culture without becoming syncretic.”<sup>50</sup>

Simon Chan, a Pentecostal, makes his own contribution to the ongoing debate in an essay that forms part of the book, *The Great Tradition: A Great Labor*. In this essay, like Belcher, Chan emphasizes the need for the liturgy to be rooted in what he calls the “Great Tradition.” He hinges most of his deliberations on the relationship and role of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Pentecostal tradition, concluding that the Holy Spirit “cannot be domesticated by our liturgy, but rather comes to enliven the liturgy.”<sup>51</sup> Chapell believes tradition is critical and that “God intends for us to stand on the shoulders of those faithful before us.”<sup>52</sup> He believes tradition should “inform, not rule,” however, and warns that “[s]lavish loyalty to traditions will keep us from ministering effectively to our generation, but trashing the past entirely denies God’s purposes for the church on which we must build.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 91-140.

<sup>50</sup> Belcher, *Deep Church*, 133.

<sup>51</sup> Simon Chan, “The Future of the Liturgy: A Pentecostal Contribution,” in *The Great Tradition: A Great Labor*, ed. Philip Harrold and D. H. Williams (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 65.

<sup>52</sup> Chapell, *Christ-centered Worship*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Chapell, *Christ-centered Worship*, 16.

## Preparing for Cross-cultural Engagement

“Culture shock strikes most people who enter deeply into new cultures”<sup>54</sup> forcing them to adapt to their new environment. The response to culture shock is a process of adaptation or as Paul Hiebert calls it, “The Cycle of Culture Shock.” Two critical phases of this cycle are resolution and adjustment.<sup>55</sup> It is during these phases that the immigrant engages in re-establishing his or her social structures. Villafañe believes the “Hispanic culture and person cannot be understood apart from this religious dimension.”<sup>56</sup> This view is also true for the Bahamian and Jamaican COGOP adherents, who came to South Florida with their own brand of Pentecostal understanding of the gospel and planted churches to facilitate their worship of God.

There are real benefits to being a new church and Aubrey Malphrus gives three: new churches grow faster than established churches; secondly, new churches evangelize better; and finally, leaders gain credibility in new churches.<sup>57</sup> But there are also reality checks to any such efforts. Firstly, “America is an unchurched culture,”<sup>58</sup> unlike the cultures of the immigrant communities. In *Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Malphrus is resolute that the new church must pursue the unchurched. But the new immigrant church planters must be properly prepared if they are to be successful.

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<sup>54</sup> Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 66.

<sup>55</sup> Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 76.

<sup>56</sup> Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 42-43.

<sup>58</sup> Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, 117.

After all, their new place of residence is different from their homeland. McManus says it best: “Cultures sing their own stories, and carry their own aromas.”<sup>59</sup>

### **Prepared Planters/Leaders**

Walter Wagoner notes that Catholics believe that this formal training must be accompanied by practical ministry exposure and become an integral part of the priests’ formation and preparation.<sup>60</sup> This of course squares with Catholic theology on the gospel as holistic and is truly exemplified by the present Pope, Francis. In his book on the life of Pope Francis, Chris Lowney paints a vivid picture of the background to the Pope’s demeanor as a leader. At its heart is solid Jesuit training, which not only stresses theological rigor, but a life dedicated to humility and service. As a Jesuit seminarian, Francis followed the course prescribed by the founder of his order: “During the first two years, the trainee novice studies Jesuit history and spirituality, settles into the order’s culture and prayer routines, tends the sick, teaches catechism to children and serves the disadvantaged.” About leadership generally, Lowney draws the following conclusion early in the book and rightly so: “Bluntly put, something is broken. We need new ways of reimagining leadership and better ways of preparing ourselves and others to lead.”<sup>61</sup>

In *Between Two Worlds*, John Stott argues that “the health of the Christian and of the Church depends on the Word of God,” and he agrees with Martin Luther’s assessment that this is “‘the highest and only duty and obligation’ of every bishop, pastor and

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<sup>59</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church of God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 12.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Wagoner, *The Seminary Pentecostal and Catholic* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1996), 228-243.

<sup>61</sup> Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2013), 3.

preacher.”<sup>62</sup> This is the guiding light for ministerial formation within evangelical ranks. Haddon Robinson, in addressing the call by some for a greater emphasis on social action within the Church, asserts that by that reasoning the apostles erred, and they really should have said, “It is not right that we should forsake the Word of God to serve tables.”<sup>63</sup>

“There was a time when Pentecostals called modern academic theology a tragedy, whose fruit is empty churches.” Allan Anderson, like Hollenwegger, alludes to the time some believed that, “the words ‘Pentecostal’ and academic theology are mutually exclusive.”<sup>64</sup> Anderson acknowledges, however, that, “most early Pentecostal leaders and some of their most successful pastors in many parts of the world have been those with little or no theological education.”<sup>65</sup> He suggests that for Pentecostals to be qualified for leadership, they simply have to demonstrate spirituality and the call, rather than intellectual abilities or ministerial skills. Ruthlyn Bradshaw shares this view, stating in *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership*, that “it is an undeniable fact that in some instances, especially in the earlier years, Pentecostals have shied away from formal theological studies and training.”<sup>66</sup>

From early in its history, the Church of God was concerned about the training of its leaders, both ministerial and lay. “On January 1, 1918, 12 students from four states met with Nora Chambers. This first class meeting of the Church of God’s Bible Training

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<sup>62</sup> John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 24.

<sup>63</sup> Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 242.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 242.

<sup>66</sup> Ruthlyn Bradshaw, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” in *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership*, ed. Phyllis Thompson (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 55.

School (BTS) led to the founding of Lee University.”<sup>67</sup> Chambers, who was a minister of the church, herself a student and a teacher at Holmes Bible School in Altamont, South Carolina.<sup>68</sup> The COGOP operated Bible Training Camps (later Bible Training Institutes) that were short term schools, and were offered in each state or nation over three terms. The spirit of the movement is best reflected in the message to the students included in the course materials: “That it is in order to study is shown by the words of Paul to young Timothy.”<sup>69</sup> Classes were offered to both ministers and laity and covered five subjects—Doctrine, Bible, Business, Pastoral and Auxiliaries. The liberal arts college started in 1966, but closed in 1992.

Speaking from firsthand experience in Boston, Villafañe believes that “if we are to win ethnic minorities for Christ, we must also provide for contextual theological education for ethnic leaders and for those who would minister among them.”<sup>70</sup> To achieve this, “there must be a commitment by our churches, denominations, Bible institutes, colleges and seminaries to consider seriously reaching out and establishing theological centers in ethnic communities for training of ethnic minority leadership.”<sup>71</sup>

George Webber, in a 1983 essay entitled “Seeking the Shalom of the City,” tells the story of New York Theological Seminary, which focuses on, “empowering them [students] for greater competence in ministry, for better utilizing their leadership potential

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<sup>67</sup> D. Bruce Conn, “Lee University,” in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, vol. 2 accessed November 7, 2017, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=777>.

<sup>68</sup> Phillips, *Quest to Restore God’s House*, 288.

<sup>69</sup> Church of God of Prophecy, “Introductory Notes,” *Lessons in Bible Training*, Vol 1, (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1968).

<sup>70</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 54.

<sup>71</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 54.

in church and community, and in developing coherence between theology and practice.”<sup>72</sup> Their emphasis is not on “new knowledge,” but ministry, an educational philosophy they presently follow. Ortiz is convinced “that socio-economic barriers are even more difficult than crossing racial or ethnic lines,”<sup>73</sup> and are therefore a major challenge for urban pastors trying to engage in multi-ethnic ministries. In this regard, like Villafañe and Webber, he prescribes training of “leadership that lives out the gospel incarnationally in this massive, changing society.”<sup>74</sup>

Duane Elmer, who is described as a cross-cultural specialist, dedicates an entire section of his book, *Cross-Cultural Connections*, to the issue of “Attitudes and Skills for Cultural Adjustment” and gives six useful tips for developing the skills for cross-cultural effectiveness. These he cites as:

1. It Takes Time (ITT)—“go into the new culture knowing there will be bumps,” others experience but never gave up. Don’t give up because that’s exactly what the devil wants, but God as a purpose for you being where you are.
2. Monitor, Monitor, Monitor (MMM)—monitor our emotions because they create quick, unthinking reactions that can damage relationships. Think about what you are feeling, name the negative emotion, find out the cause of the negative emotion, investigate the options available and choose the best thoughts, words and actions.
3. Prior Question of trust (PQT)—building trust is culturally defined. Smile when meeting someone, frequently as friendship develops, speak positively of the host culture and their families. Express happiness in the relationships, reciprocate kind deeds and learn the local ways.
4. Strategic Withdrawal Strategy (SWS)—when overloaded, take a break and settle one’s self. Find your bearings again and return refreshed, let your withdrawal be short.

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<sup>72</sup> George Webber, “New York Theological Seminary Seeking the Shalom of the City,” *Ministry by the People*, ed. K. Ross Kinsler (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 192.

<sup>73</sup> Ortiz, *One New People*, 38.

<sup>74</sup> Ortiz, *One New People*, 146.



5. Laugh at Yourself, Laugh at Life (LAY-LAL)—a sense of humor gets us through many tough spots, relieves tension and put things in proper perspective.
6. It's Different (ID)—may be the most useful statement you can use—rehearse it daily. Remember, it is not about right or wrong, it is more about being different.<sup>75</sup>

A classic example is the white Miami church, which was located on the north side of the Palmetto Expressway in a white community, sitting on several acres of land and with larger housing units on similarly large plots of land. The black church on the south of the same expressway was in a black neighborhood with small bungalows of under a thousand square feet. The Church property itself was stuck in the back of a single lane dead end street. Blacks were forbidden by the whites from attending that church, and in fact members there would help visiting blacks find the black church.

### **Striving for Relevance**

If Murray is correct about the need for a “change in the shape of the church,”<sup>76</sup> then Sean O’Neal, the author of *Bridges to People*, is equally correct that “effective church ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world calls for the church pastor to move from the role of professional pastor in the Christian world of past generations to a missionary pastor role in this post-modern, post-Christian, society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>77</sup> Missionaries, by the nature of their task, “must become personally immersed with people who are different. Lingenfelter and Mayers, in *Ministering Cross-culturally*, believe this calls

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<sup>75</sup> Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping and Filling In Around the World* (Downer’s Grove, IL: 2002), 106-113.

<sup>76</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 120.

<sup>77</sup> Sean S. O’Neal, *Bridges to People* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 155.

for the missionary to be socialized all over again, and to accomplish this, missionaries must be willing to begin like children to learn the other culture and be even willing to “adopt many of their priorities.” They believe that if an individual or a group are “to do ministry ‘with’ people in any culture, [they] must learn to adapt to it.”<sup>78</sup> Timothy Tennent makes a profound observation:

Urbanization has far reaching implications for the twenty-first century missiological strategy. First, most evangelistic and church-planting strategies were formulated for and implemented in rural settings because that was the dominant context of the nineteenth-century missions. Twentieth-century strategies often simply made minor adjustments to the nineteenth-century models. Today, entirely new paradigms of mission strategy must emerge that conceptualize a mission field that is primarily urban. Even today, despite the dramatic rise in urbanization I find that many people continue to assume that an “unreached” people group must live in a remote or tribal region of the world.<sup>79</sup>

Church growth experts all concur that one way of growing churches is through church planting. Stuart Murray, a British church planter, catalogues his own involvement over many years: “I have been involved in church planting in various ways for most of the past eighteen years: establishing a church in East London that now has three congregations; participating in a failed attempt to plant a church in another part of London.”<sup>80</sup> Murray nevertheless expresses grave concerns about “the ways we are planting churches, the kinds of churches we are planting and especially about the lack of theological reflection among church planters.”<sup>81</sup> He believes “church planting may be a

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<sup>78</sup> Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 110.

<sup>79</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2010), 46.

<sup>80</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 4.

<sup>81</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 4.

significant means of advancing the mission of God.<sup>82</sup> He also believes this will not be automatic, “unless church planting is established within a more holistic context.”<sup>83</sup>

Donald McGavran, a leading name in the church growth movement and author of *Planting Growing Churches*, believes planting churches is a part of the Great Commission and that every national church needs a “bold plan” for planting churches. He is convinced that “vague general work and shifting emphasis from discipling to some form of perfecting is not what [is meant] by bold plans.”<sup>84</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson point to evidence “that new churches, generally speaking not only grow faster than established churches but also grow more through evangelism.”<sup>85</sup> Ott and Wilson’s view is that “church planting movements are disciple making movements that empower ordinary people to make a kingdom difference in the world as they rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>86</sup> This approach mirrors Villafañe’s view on theological training for urban ministry to ensure lay involvement. In laying out his criteria for urban theological training, he recommends that “[u]rban theological education should be structured to train both clergy and laypersons.”<sup>87</sup>

In addressing the need for churches that are mission oriented, Murray argues that “ecclesiology and missiology are inextricably related.”<sup>88</sup> These missionary congregations

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<sup>82</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 26.

<sup>84</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 286.

<sup>85</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 28.

<sup>86</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 74.

<sup>87</sup> Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 79.

<sup>88</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 129.

in the first place do not make church planting a priority, but rather, “the focus is on the renewal and reformation of existing churches, even though it is acknowledged that this may be a slow process and that not all churches will be able to make this transition.”<sup>89</sup> Murray makes the point that some of the marks of this model are, “equipping people for witness in the world, rather than in-house activities; a balance between distinctiveness and engagement; and an emphasis on being as well as doing, on stillness rather than frenetic activity, on streamlining and focus.”<sup>90</sup> In this model, pastoral care is not the focal point and mission is seen as an activity; pastoral care is seen as integral to mission and is therefore set in that context. Those who would be so involved, “must be culturally savvy, conversant with non-Christian religions, and aware of the complexities of urban social interactions and the way in which information is passed on and assimilated, which are profoundly different than in traditional agrarian, rural societies.”

The COGOP’s structure places evangelism and church growth as a direct responsibility of each state Administrative Bishop, who while having the responsibility for doing so, does not necessarily have the system in place to achieve it. State Administrative Bishops or Overseers are “responsible for the organizational structure, implementation, and administration of the local ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy in a given nation, region, or state as well as the supervision of the personnel involved in those programs and ministries.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 130-131.

<sup>90</sup> Murray, *Church Planting*, 130.

<sup>91</sup> DeWayne Hamby ed. *Ministry Policy Manual* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2015), 30.

One of their responsibilities is promotional: “Evangelism and missions (home and abroad) are key to the mandated challenge of the church. Therefore the overseer should place promotional priority on evangelism and missions. He should arrange for and assist in conducting a general evangelism campaign throughout the nation/region/state.”<sup>92</sup>

The duties of these officers of the Church were different in 1960. At that time, evangelism was the first duty of the Overseer. “Each overseer is to have the oversight of his state or territory and as much as possible conduct or order a general evangelistic campaign over his state during the year.”<sup>93</sup> Another of the Overseer’s responsibilities was the appointment of “district overseers and any other personnel necessary to administrate the national/regional/state programs.”<sup>94</sup>

District Overseers also had clearly defined roles in those days. Administratively, they were expected to conduct business conferences for female ministers, who were acting as pastors, and for men who were not licensed/ordained, but nevertheless taking care of churches in the Overseer’s district. They were to do evangelistic work in their district if they had time. If they had a district with no churches it was their duty to evangelize and organize churches.<sup>95</sup>

While the appointment of District Overseers continue to show as an appointive duty of the State Bishop, their role is muted, as they have no independent duties assigned to them. Instead their appointment is lumped in with a general category of the state

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<sup>92</sup> Hamby, ed., *Ministry Policy Manual*, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes or the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN, September 13-19, 1960), 157.

<sup>94</sup> Hamby, ed., *Ministry Policy Manual*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> Church of God of Prophecy, *Minutes of the 55<sup>th</sup> Assembly*, 158.

appointment, inter alia, “to appoint district overseers and any other personnel necessary to administrate the national/regional/state programs.”<sup>96</sup>

Aubrey Malphrus contends that many small churches “don’t have quality because they don’t have quality. They’re weak in evangelism and will remain small.”<sup>97</sup> Karl Vaters repudiates this notion, arguing that, “not all successes have numbers to verify them.”<sup>98</sup> Having experienced his local church increasing in numbers, only to see declining attendance and the return of his congregation to its former “small” size, Vaters encourages pastors of small congregations to “embrace who we are. Let’s do what God is calling us to. Let’s pastor the church we’ve got, not the one we wish.”<sup>99</sup>

From the literature reviewed it is abundantly clear that COGOP pastors strive to be missional. Internal pastoral care aimed at maintaining what was should be replaced with reaching what is. What does not exist is a diverse community and the literature reviewed is unequivocal that churches, even if starting out as homogenous, should have as a clear goal the inclusion of all cultures.

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<sup>96</sup> Hamby, ed., *Ministry Policy Manual*, 31.

<sup>97</sup> Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, 64.

<sup>98</sup> Karl Vaters, *The Grasshopper Myth: Big Churches, Small Churches and the Small Thinking that Divides Us* (United States: New Small Church, 2012), 134.

<sup>99</sup> Vaters, *The Grasshopper Myth*, 116.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Theological Reflection on God, Humanity, and Sin**

Theology proper is the starting point of all Christian theology. Athenagoras of Athens affirms that there is “one God, who is uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassable, incomprehensible, and without limit.”<sup>1</sup> Augustine’s description is suggestive of a similar high view of God, “Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power and thy wisdom infinite. And thee would man praise; man, but a particle of thy creation.”<sup>2</sup> Anthony Hoekema in *Created in God’s Image*, reminds us that the Scriptures “make it clear that all created things and all created beings are totally dependent on God.”<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, John Frame notes that “lordship is a covenantal concept.”<sup>4</sup> Frame adds that “‘Lord’ is the name God gives to himself as head of the Mosaic Covenant and the name given to Jesus Christ as the head of the New Covenant.”<sup>5</sup> For Frame, Israel and everyone else are servants of God, “God is Lord of all” and in “all his relations with the world He speaks and acts as Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> Athenagoras of Athens on the Christian God, *The Christian Theology Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. Alister E. McGrath, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Book 1. Translated by Edward Bouverie Pusey.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 5.

<sup>4</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P& R Publishing, 1987), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 13.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Genesis 1: 26, 28.

Psalm 24:1 affirms that “The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will, they were created and have their being.”

New Testament scripture affirms the Old Testament witness of the first humans created: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13). Romans 5 provides an excellent synopsis of the relationship God shares with humankind, his creation between the twin poles of creation and redemption. “Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners” (5:19), commonly referred to as the “fall.” Hoekema believes that this story originally recorded in Genesis 3 shows “that man was created in a state of integrity but fell into a state of corruption.”<sup>7</sup> D.A. Carson, in revisiting H. Richard Niebuhr’s, *Christ and Culture*, sees “the fall as both universal and devastating because they are first and foremost revolt against the Almighty, resulting in God’s wrath and judgment.”<sup>8</sup> The result of the fall is that man by virtue of sin has become depraved and his reality has been distorted.

This depraved existence is reflected more widely than just in human beings, however. Raymond Rivera believes the fall produced “captivity”<sup>9</sup> and “began human history independent of God.”<sup>10</sup> In the fall, “[m]an and woman entered a harsh world,

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<sup>7</sup> Hoekema, *Created in His Image*, 117.

<sup>8</sup> D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 47.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 8.



having been condemned to a life of hard labor and sorrow (Gen 3:17-19, 22).<sup>11</sup> This captivity seeped into the totality of human existence, encompassing the social, economic, political, and spiritual realms.<sup>12</sup> Timothy Tennent's observation is useful in understanding God's eternal plan, when he expresses in *Invitation to Mission* the view that the Father was sowing "seeds into the fabric and design of creation that anticipate the plan of redemption."<sup>13</sup> This is reflected "in the particular historical development of people groups, God the Father is working to prepare and anticipate the later full revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>14</sup> Carson asserts, "the fall does not have the last word."<sup>15</sup> "Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:17).

### **Immigration as Movement of a People**

In Genesis 3-11, "God's historical purposes were misdirected by the rebellion of humankind."<sup>16</sup> Goheen sees this as "selfish misuse" of "cultural power" for exploitative purposes. He believes that people "do not image the self-giving love of God in their rule of the creation and the creation of the cultural and social life."<sup>17</sup> This he believes forms

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<sup>11</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 73.

<sup>14</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 73.

<sup>15</sup> Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 48.

<sup>16</sup> Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History, and Issues* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 105.

<sup>17</sup> Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 105.

the basis for Abraham and by extension, Israel, “to be a community in which their cultural and social life is entered on in the loving service of God and one another.”<sup>18</sup>

These events are best understood from the standpoint that God’s mission to the world is irreversibly interwoven throughout scripture and did not begin with Jesus.<sup>19</sup> In fact, “Since Genesis 3, God’s mission has operated primarily in relation to the fall.”<sup>20</sup> In Genesis 11, with the destruction of the tower of Babel, God not only destroys people’s desire to “build a name for themselves,” but scatters them. It is from these scattered peoples that Abraham is called to begin a nation and receive a “land to which nations would come to worship God.”<sup>21</sup>

The world was a unified whole and people moved freely, settling where they wanted and had, “one language and a common speech” (Gen 11:1-2). The history of the Jewish people is a history of immigration, both from the standpoint of being immigrants themselves and being hosts to immigrants. Consequently, the Torah provides a good reading on the topic and provides YHWH’s instruction on how immigrants should be treated. YHWH expressly demands of Israel, “Do not mistreat or oppress a *foreigner*, for you were *foreigners* in Egypt” (Exod 22:21). The word “foreigners” is defined in the major concordances and lexicons as follows:

Strong’s Concordance:

The Hebrew word translated *foreigner* is, גֵּר (*Ger*).

gêr, gare; or (fully) geyr (gare); from גִּיר (Gur) H1481;

properly, a guest; by implication, a foreigner:—alien, sojourner, stranger.

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<sup>18</sup> Goheem, *Introducing Christian Mission Today*, 105.

<sup>19</sup> Ed Stetzer, “An Evangelical Kingdom Community Approach,” *The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation*, ed. Craig Ott (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 107.

<sup>20</sup> Stetzer, *The Mission of the Church*, 99.

<sup>21</sup> Stetzer, *The Mission of the Church*, 107.

גֹּר (Gur) is a primitive root word meaning, sojourn, abide, dwell in, dwell with, remain, inhabit, be a stranger, be continuing, surely.

Brown-Driver-Briggs (Old Testament Hebrew-English Lexicon):  
to sojourn, abide, dwell in, dwell with, remain, inhabit, be a stranger, be continuing, surely<sup>22</sup>

Israelites and the outsiders:

(נֹכְרִי, *nokhriy*; בְּנֵי-נֹכַר, *benei-nekhar*; גֵּר, *ger*). Sociopolitical labels, such as foreigner and sojourner, used to designate outsiders with regard to Israelite life, culture, and religion.

The Old Testament distinguishes between two basic types of non-Israelites: the sojourner (גֵּר, *ger*; Exod. 12:48; Lev 19:33; Num 9:14; 15:14; Deut 10:18; 24:17; 27:19; Jer. 7:6; Mal 3:5) and the foreigner (נֹכְרִי, *nokhriy*; בְּנֵי-נֹכַר, *benei-nekhar*; Gen 17:12; 17:27; Exod. 12:43, 45; Lev 22:25; Deut 15:3; 23:20).<sup>23</sup>

In *The Immigration Crisis*, James K. Hoffmeier maintains that the Israelites were not only “aliens or legal immigrants”<sup>24</sup> dwelling in Egypt, but they became “immigrants passing through lands, not their own along with their flocks and herds.”<sup>25</sup> He traces Israel’s origin back to Abraham,<sup>26</sup> who was “armed with promises of divine blessings and a land—hence the expression ‘the Promised Land.’”<sup>27</sup> Abraham also understood “that he was an alien who needed to accommodate to the laws and norms”<sup>28</sup> in his new homeland. In Genesis 13:18, Abraham as a foreigner was able to “practice his religion freely”<sup>29</sup> at Hebron and later purchased property to bury Sarah (Gen 23: 3-4).

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<sup>22</sup> Hebrew Dictionary, Lexicon Concordance, accessed November 27, 2017, <http://lexiconcordance.com/hebrew/1481.html>.

<sup>23</sup> R. Jones, “Israelites, and the Outsiders,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Barry, et al (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). (Accessed from Logos Bible Software, November 27, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> James K. Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Alien and the Bible* (Wheaton: IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 815, Kindle edition.

<sup>25</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 348.

<sup>26</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 433.

<sup>27</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 456.

<sup>28</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 586.

<sup>29</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 581.

Hoffmeier dismisses the notion that people could roam freely and makes the point that “even a traveler, a foreigner, passing through the territory of another had to obtain permission to do so.”<sup>30</sup> He alludes to Numbers 20:14 -21, where Moses sends messengers from Kadesh Barnea to the King of Edom as proof: “Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your country” (Num 20:16b -17). The King of Edom stoutly refuses, even after Moses has reminded him of the plight of the Israelites and their difficult past, which is not in keeping with the “socially accepted norm of hospitality” of those days and for which they are remembered.<sup>31</sup>

The Torah is replete with YHWH’s injunction to Israel regarding the foreigner. Examples include the following:

They were not to be mistreated or oppressed,	Exod 22:21; Lev 19:33
They should be treated as a native-born	Lev 19:34
They were to be loved,	Lev 19:30; Deut 10:19
They were not to be deprived of justice	Deut 24:18.
Provision must be made for food	Deut 24: 19
They should be encouraged to share in their religion	Num 9: 14
There should be some restrictions, however, as in:	
Do not place a foreigner over you	Deut 17:15
They must be made to repay debts	Deut 15:3
They should be made to pay interest on loans	Deut 23:20

YHWH makes these demands on the Israelites regarding aliens for two reasons. First, Israel should do all of this because of their own experiences while they were foreigners in Egypt (Exod 22:21; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19 and Deut 24: 18). Secondly, YHWH makes the demands based on his own love for the alien (Deut 10:17-19). The prophets re-affirm the Torah’s record of YHWH’s impending judgment against those

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<sup>30</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 388.

<sup>31</sup> Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis*, 388-389.

who oppress the marginalized, the alien included (Jer 7:5-7; Ezek 47:21-23 and Zech 7:10).

Care for the wellbeing of aliens is “the responsibility of the covenant community—each Israelite, assuming the covenant was actually kept faithfully—to contribute his share of the welfare burden personally (rather than through taxes), to avoid personally any discrimination against the needy in any way, and to treat all those in need or of limited resources as brothers and sisters, virtual family members.”<sup>32</sup> In *The New American Commentary* of Exodus, K. D. Stuart makes the point that “no government welfare system existed in Israel.”<sup>33</sup> Timothy Tennent, in *Invitation to World Mission*, maintains that there are “dozens of texts that demonstrate that although God has entered into particularistic covenant with one nation, Israel, He enjoys sovereign dominion over all the nations of the world.”<sup>34</sup>

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament employs a variety of equivalent terms for the “foreigner”: *allogenēs*, *allophulos*, *xenos*, and *allotrios*. It does not, however, give the same prominence to such terminology as the Old Testament—primarily because through the work of Christ, ethnic-religious divisions within humanity have been, in principle, overcome (see especially Eph 2:11–21). Reminiscent of the Old Testament, “ethnic” usages are passages where “foreigner” designates those who are not by birth members of the people of Israel (Luke 17:18; Acts 10:28; Eph 2:19; Heb 11:34) or of some other people (Acts 17:21). The faithful of Old Testament times lived on the

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<sup>32</sup> K. D. Stuart, *The New American Commentary Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, Vol 2 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 515.

<sup>33</sup> Stuart, *The New American Commentary Exodus*, 515.

<sup>34</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 114.

earth as “foreigners” in exile from their heavenly homeland (Heb 11:9, 13). The duty of hospitality to fellow Christians who are “foreign” in the sense of not being personally known to one is strongly inculcated (Matt 25:35ff; 3 John 5).<sup>35</sup>

Deuteronomy 10: 18 shows a God who “defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the *alien* (my emphasis), giving him food and clothing.” Luke’s gospel conveys the idea that “the ‘poor’ to whom Jesus comes are represented by every kind of first-century outcast—the traditional poor, sinners, Samaritans, Gentiles, and women.”<sup>36</sup> Douglas Moo, in his commentary on James, believes “God’s people must imitate God by showing a similar concern for the poor and disadvantaged.”<sup>37</sup> God’s law focuses on love for the neighbor (James 2:8), “pure and undefiled religion” which will manifest itself in loving concern for the helpless in society (Jas 1:27), in a meek and unselfish attitude toward others (Jas 3:13-18). It will renounce discrimination (2:1-13) and not speak evil of others (4:11-12).<sup>38</sup>

### **The Mission of God**

Mission ➡ Evangelism ➡ Planting Growing Churches

“Therefore *go* and *make disciples of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

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<sup>35</sup> Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary, Vol 2, 830, Logos Bible Software, accessed November 16, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon D. Fee, “The Kingdom of God and the Churches’ Global Mission,” in *Called and Empowered, Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 1991), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Moo, *The Letter of James*, 37.

The following brief exegetical notes will help in framing the biblical mandate the Christian church has been given to carry out the mission of God. As will be demonstrated later, Matthew's record of what we now know as the "Great Commission" is not the only record, but it does convey all the basic elements of what the Commission entails. For brevity, three key elements are isolated, *Go...make disciples...of all nations*.

### *Go*

Strong's definition:

πορεύομαι *poreúomai*, *por-yoo'-om-ahē*; middle voice from a derivative of the same as G3984; to traverse, i.e. travel (literally or figuratively; especially to remove (figuratively, die), live, etc.; --depart, go (away, forth, one's way, up), (make a, take a) journey, walk.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

Strong's NT 4198: πορεύω

πορεύω: to lead over, carry over, transfer

(Pindar, Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato, others); middle (from Herodotus down), present πορεύομαι; imperfect ἐπορεύομην; future πορεύσομαι; perfect participle πεπορευμένος; aorist subjunctive person plural πορευσώμεθα (James 4:13 Rec.st Griesbach); aorist passive ἐπορεύθην; (πόρος a ford [cf.

English pore i.e. passage through; Curtius, § 356; Vanicek, p. 479]);

the Sept. often for לָלֶךְ, לָלֶכְתְּ, לָלֶךְ; properly, to lead oneself across;

i. e. to take one's way, betake oneself, set out, depart;

a. properly: τὴν ὁδὸν μου, to pursue the journey on which one has entered,

continue one's journey (A. V. go on one's way), Acts 8:39; πορεύειν followed by.

Both Strong's and Thayer's Lexicon convey the idea of travel or going on a journey.

### *Make Disciples of*

Strong's Concordance

mathéteuó: to be a disciple, to make a disciple

Original Word: μαθητεύω

Part of Speech: Verb

Short Definition: I make disciples make into disciples

Definition: I make a disciple of, train in discipleship; pass: I am trained, disciplined, instructed

Thayer's Greek Lexicon.

Strong's NT 3100: μαθητεύω

μαθητεύω: 1 aorist ἐμαθήτευσα; 1 aorist passive ἐμαθητευθην; (μαθητής);  
1. intransitive, τίνι, to be the disciple of one; to follow his precepts and instruction: Matthew 27:57 R G WH marginal reading, cf. John 19:38  
2. transitive (cf. Winer's Grammar, p. 23 and § 38, 1; [Buttmann, § 131, 4]) to make a disciple; to teach, instruct: τινα, Matthew 28:19; Acts 14:21; passive with a dative of the person whose disciple one is made, Matthew 27:57.

### *All Nations*

The KJV translates Strong's G1484 in the following manner: Gentiles (93x), nation (64x), heathen (5x), people (2x).

#### Definition:

ἔθνος *éthnos*, *eth'-nos*; probably from G1486; a race (as of the same habit), i.e. a tribe; specially, a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually, by implication, pagan):—Gentile, heathen, nation, people.

#### Outline of Biblical Usage

a multitude (whether of men or of beasts) associated or living together  
a company, troop, swarm  
a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus  
the human family  
a tribe, nation, people group in the OT, foreign nations not worshipping the true God, pagans, Gentiles  
Paul uses the term for Gentile Christians

#### Thayer's Greek Lexicon

Strong's NT 1484: ἔθνος ἔθνος, ἔθνους, τό:

1. a multitude (whether of men or of beasts) associated or living together; a company, troop, swarm: ἔθνος ἐταίρων, ἔθνος Ἀχαιῶν, ἔθνος λαῶν, Homer, Iliad; ἔθνος μελισσῶν, 2, 87; μυιαὶ ἔθνεα, ibid. 469.
2. "a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus (τό ἔθνος τό θῆλυ ἢ ἄρρεν, Xenophon, oec. 7, 26): πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων, the human race,
3. race, nation: Matthew 21:43; Acts 10:35, etc..<sup>39</sup>

The New Testament does not concern itself with racism as contemporary society views it. "The Greek word translated "race" in the New Testament is used to denote a person's descendants (Acts 4:6), a person's family (Acts 7:13), and peoples or

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<sup>39</sup> Blue Letter Bible, "Lexicon," accessed November 22, 2017, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1484&t=V>.



nationalities (Mark 7:26).”<sup>40</sup> This suggests a common heritage and so the Bible is clear that we are all of the same human race, whose origin and source of life is God. All come from the same original parents (Adam and Eve: Acts 17:26); all are contaminated by the same disease (sin: Rom 3:23), which ultimately results in death (Rom 5:12) and all have the same need (a relationship with Jesus Christ that can remove the penalties of sin: Rom 6:23).<sup>41</sup> The target audience is all peoples. Jesus’ concern is obviously for the nations. The Greek *ethnos* suggests race, with a strong connotation of foreigners or non-Jewish people, and not just nations based on geography, but all people groups.

The great commission is, of course, meaningless if the one who gives it lacks authority, but not so in this case. Indeed as Ott and Wilson note, “to go and make disciples of all nations, is sandwiched between the affirmation that all authority in heaven and earth is given to Jesus (v.18) and the promise of Jesus’ presence with the disciples until the end of the age (v.20).”<sup>42</sup> Tennent is very careful, and rightfully so, to make Christ’s Great Commission wider than the Matthew text which most people are prone to associate it with. Mark includes this mandate in 16:14-18; Luke does so also in Luke 24:44-49 and Acts 1:7-8; and John’s record can be found in 20:19-23. All of these texts embody a single commission “to a group of gathered disciples.” Tennent believes Matthew fulfills the Abrahamic promise (Gen 12:1) by making disciples of all nations. This is ideally reflected in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus that includes four Gentile women, Tamar (1:3), Rahab (1:5), Ruth (1:5) and Bathsheba (1:6). He believes their

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<sup>40</sup> Anthony Peart, *Separate No More: Understanding and Developing Racial Reconciliation in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 96.

<sup>41</sup> Peart, *Separate No More*, 96.

<sup>42</sup> Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 8.

inclusion serves as a reminder to Matthew's Jewish audience "that there are faithful, godly people who are part of the Gentile nations of the world." While acknowledging the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the Markan commission, Tennent sides with the late addition to the corpus of Mark. Mark clearly shows the need to preach the gospel to all of creation, despite suffering. Luke conveys the holistic nature of this gospel witness and the essential element of the Holy Spirit empowerment to accomplish the task. Finally, John portrays the sovereign God as the sending one and Jesus as the sending sent one.<sup>43</sup> The people of the Bahamas and Jamaica understood their call to spread the gospel was not confined to their homelands so they seized the opportunity to preach and plant churches in their adopted home.

### **Pentecostal Spirituality and Mission**

In *Gospel and Spirit*, Gordon Fee points out that Pentecostalism shares the "classical view of many pietistic groups, reaching at least as far back as early Methodism, and found subsequently in various holiness and deeper life movements, namely, that there is for all believers a 'baptism in the Holy Spirit,' which is separate from and sequential to the initial experience of conversion."<sup>44</sup> However, there is a point of departure for Pentecostalism, as Pentecostals "insist on the gift of tongues as the evidential sign that such a baptism had indeed taken place, and to insist on the empowering-for-service dimension of the experience."<sup>45</sup> Pentecostals see Pentecost (Acts 2: 4) as the fulfillment

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<sup>43</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to Mission*, 128-154.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel, and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 105.

<sup>45</sup> Fee, *Gospel, and Spirit*, 105.

of Joel 2:28-32 and take the events of the Book of Acts literally. They believe in the continuity of the gifts of the Spirit, since God said that in the last days, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” Pentecostals believe that the ministry of the Apostles and the early church is for the church of these last days. For Pentecostals, Jesus’ instructions to the disciples, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Luke 24:49 & Acts 1: 4) are proof that any attempt to preach the gospel must be preceded by the infilling or baptism of the Spirit.

For Pentecostals, “signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mark 16:17-18). “The charismatic manifestations emerging among them—tongues, healing, exorcism, prophecy—they interpreted as signs that they were bringing in the last times.”<sup>46</sup> Pentecostals connect the coming of the Spirit to their strong eschatological expectation, ushering in worldwide evangelism, church planting and church growth (Acts 2:17-21).

The Spirit’s baptism has major implications for missions. “For Luke, Spirit baptism does not only purge and indwell so that the people of God can be a holy temple, it empowers so that they may also function as a living witness.”<sup>47</sup> Frank Macchia sees the “flame of the Spirit that burns within God’s people as a holy temple is a spreading flame.”<sup>48</sup> For Pentecostals, receiving the Spirit comes with signs and reading the Book of

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<sup>46</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 53.

<sup>47</sup> Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 101.

<sup>48</sup> Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, 101.

Acts “leads one to the conclusion that reception of the Spirit often took place with visible signs (see 4:31; 8:15-19; 10:44-47; 19:6).”<sup>49</sup> Steven Land believes the “recovery of Pentecostal power—a definite, visible historical occurrence—was a fulfillment of the promise of the Father which was necessary to carry out the global missionary mandate of the church.”<sup>50</sup>

Early Pentecostals had a “sense of urgency to warn the church and to witness to the nations.”<sup>51</sup> This drive colored all of their “understanding, activity, and affectivity.”<sup>52</sup> They believed that given the imminent return of the Lord, the gospel must be “proclaimed in power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>53</sup> For Pentecostals, the emphasis is “on being sent by the Spirit and depends more on what is described as the Spirit’s leading than on a formal structure”<sup>54</sup> (Acts 8:26-27; Acts 13:2). August Cerillo, Jr. highlights the passion of the Pentecostal movement as being born with “missionary vision,” a driving desire to “evangelize the non-Christian and recruit the non-Pentecostal believer at home and abroad.”<sup>55</sup> The Pentecostal theological understanding that the “post-conversion Holy Spirit’s baptism” was given “for holy living and evangelization

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<sup>49</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical International and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 31.

<sup>50</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 198.

<sup>55</sup> Augustus Cerillo, Jr, “Pentecostals and the City,” in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, et al (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 100.

and the imminent return of the Lord”<sup>56</sup> motivated “scores of Pentecostal pioneers, including many women, at whatever personal cost or lack of proper training” to begin ministering in towns and communities across the United States and around the world.<sup>57</sup>

### **The Church and the Mission of God**

If God’s desire is always for the kingdom and if it’s full revelation was achieved in the Son, then the Son’s assignment was to establish the great bastion of the gospel, the church. Ott and Wilson believe “Jesus is the real church planter, as he promised”<sup>58</sup> (Matt 16:18). So protective of the church was Jesus that he promised it would outlast its opposition. Orthodox Christianity holds its founding to coincide with the events of Pentecost,<sup>59</sup> but most importantly, the “era of the Spirit is, furthermore the era of the church.”<sup>60</sup> Jesus says of the Spirit, that when he comes he will be an advocate to help believers and will remain with them forever (John 14:16); he will testify about Jesus (15:24); he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness (16:8); he will guide believers into all truth; he will speak only what he hears from Christ and tell what is to come (16:13, 15); and finally, he would glorify Christ (16:14).

Another motif from the Matthew 28 passage that is pertinent to this research, is that of discipleship. The instruction “and teaching them to obey everything I have

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<sup>56</sup> Cerillo, *Called and Empowered*, 100.

<sup>57</sup> Cerillo, Jr., *Called and Empowered*, 100.

<sup>58</sup> Ott and Wilson, *Global Church Planting*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 529.

<sup>60</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 529.

commanded you” in 28:20 is important to this study since discipleship is not possible outside of instruction or teaching and modeling. The word is a derivative from the Greek *didaskō*, which means teach,<sup>61</sup> and has the implication of making disciples and *mathētēs*, which literally means learners.<sup>62</sup> The implication then is for teachers who are engaged in teaching others, with the expectation that learning is taking place. The subject matter is “all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1; Eph 4:21), with new converts expected to become persons who are actively involved in making new disciples themselves: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16: 20). Those who lead these churches must therefore take seriously the Lord’s command and properly equip themselves to carry out this all important ministry function.

The church of Jesus Christ has a leadership structure, which includes teachers (Eph 4:11) to “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12 -13). The Apostles before the Sanhedrin are spoken of as being “unschooled and ordinary men,” but the High Priests are amazed at the courage of Peter and John and associate their courage with the fact “that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). In Matthew 5: 2, Jesus teaches the disciples and the crowd. In 7:28-29 Jesus finishes his discourse and the crowd is amazed at the authority with which he teaches. After the ascension of Jesus, a replacement is sought for Judas in the leadership ranks and the qualification is

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<sup>61</sup> W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 619.

<sup>62</sup> Vine, Unger, and White, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, 171.

that the person be “one of the men who has been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us” (Acts 1:21). With the growth of their numbers, the need for an expanded leadership becomes apparent. Those selected to serve are to be screened and only qualified individuals chosen. They should be “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3a). The selection process includes both men and women and the Apostles are clearly ready for shared leadership; “We will turn this responsibility over to them” (6:3b). Leadership in the COGOP must demonstrate its grasp of the true nature of the *missio dei* by the seriousness and business-like manner in which it selects, trains, and ordains men and women who will engage the urban centers of South Florida and plant and lead churches which will grow as a result of attracting the area’s multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-generational population.

### **Paul and the New Testament Model for Mission**

The epistle to the Galatians clearly shows that “the redemptive work of Christ and incorporation into his body have relativized the former distinctions of race, rank, and role.”<sup>63</sup> Lukan insights on the missionary movement are captured in the historic Book of Acts, which details with clarity the Apostles carrying out the commission of the Lord Jesus under the “power” of the Holy Spirit, to Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. As was noted earlier, this was more than mere geography, but was instead the reaching of all peoples and it required that the evangelists “go”. Proclaiming the good news came with its own risk and with much persecution, but with each persecution,

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<sup>63</sup> T. George, *Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 274.

new opportunities were afforded the followers of Jesus to preach the gospel. Phillip went to Samaria (Acts 8), the great persecutor of the Christ-followers movement was himself miraculously converted (Acts 9), setting the stage for a worldwide mission to the peoples of the world. Peter's Jewishness was challenged and he saw the transforming power of the gospels at work on the Gentiles (Acts 10, Gal 2:11-14), a clear departure from his Jewish expectations.

Persecution proved to be fuel for mission after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The result "was that the first large scale evangelization outside Palestine was launched by exiles."<sup>64</sup> "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:19-20). A new mission was launched to reach the Gentiles, initiated by the "breaking in" of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius' house (Acts 10). Although witnessed to by Peter, it was Paul who earns the designation, "the Apostle to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:44-48; 18:6; Rom 1:5; 15:15-18; Eph 1-2, 8; Gal 2:7-9 and 1 Tim 2:7).

Paul's *modus operandi* was as follows:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Cor 9:20-22)

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<sup>64</sup> C. Rene Padilla, "Unity of the Church and the Homogenous Unit Principle," in *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, ed. Robert Gallagher and Paul Hertig (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 79.



The center of gravity for the Christian church was also shifting. The Antioch church had become “the mother of all the Gentile churches”<sup>65</sup> and the hub for mission activities to other regions, starting with Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:2-3). “Sometime later, Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing’” (Acts 15:36). The shift was made geographically, and racial and ethnic boundaries were shattered. Paul’s approach was deliberate, strategic and well thought out. He had one motivation and it was simply this: “For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). In three missionary journeys, orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, Paul crossed the cultural divide, preached the message of the kingdom and established churches in the cities he visited in Asia and Europe. Still, he longed for a fourth missionary endeavor which he would later undertake.

Mission endeavors resulted in Paul planting new Christian churches in a number of communities including Philippi (Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 2:2.), Thessalonica (Phil 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:1.), Corinth (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1.), Ephesus (1 Cor 15:32; 16:8.) and Galatia (1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:2.), all during the first century CE. The multi-ethnic composition of these churches gave rise to serious issues among believers, as is evident in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians on a multiplicity of social issues, with “the call to unity...central to the whole epistle,”<sup>66</sup> rather than the “forming of segregated congregations open to communications with other segregated congregations.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 256.

<sup>66</sup> Padilla, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, 88.

Some matters worth considering from the Acts narrative detailing the progression in the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria and to Asia and parts of Europe, are as follows:

1. A broad-based, diverse leadership team at Antioch facilitated discipleship and mission outreach (Acts 13:1).
2. The same team approach was utilized by Paul in undertaking his subsequent mission endeavors. (Acts 15, 16 and 18).
3. The teams were diverse, becoming increasingly Gentile as they increased their reach into Asia and Europe. Paul was Jewish with Roman citizenship, while Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus (Acts 15:37-41), Silas was Jewish with Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37-39), Timothy's mother was Jewish and his father Greek, making him multi-cultural (Acts 16:1), Aquila was Jewish and Priscilla his wife's was unknown (Acts 18:2). Of the seven companions mentioned as accompanying him on the third missionary journey, five were Gentiles and the other two were Jewish.
4. Church planting was a natural outgrowth of missional work.
5. Ministry activities by Paul and his team were done across ethnicities.
6. With church growth and the inclusion of people of other cultures disputes arose (Acts 15:1).
7. The early church was not afraid to confront difficult issues (Acts 15:7).
8. The leadership was unwilling to hold on to cultural distinctiveness at the expense of church growth (Acts 15:19).
9. They encountered opposition to the message and their lives were at risk (Acts 14:19; 17:5-9; 18:6; 19: 23-41).
10. Disagreement among leaders occurred and the resultant split led to two missions being undertaken (Acts 13:13; 15:36-41), but these differences could be overcome and relationships renewed (1 Tim 4:11), leading to the writing of one of the Gospels.
11. The influence of the Holy Spirit was unquestionable (Acts 13: 2, 4; 14:3; 19:6; 20:22).
12. Prayer and fasting played a critical role in their mission endeavors (Acts 13:3; 14:23; 16:13; 16:25-27).
13. Careful planning was involved in the make-up of the teams, the route to be traveled, but leadership remained open to changes initiated by the Holy Spirit.
14. Strengthening of new churches was a priority for the Apostle and his team (Acts 14:21-22; 16:4-5).
15. The Apostle was open to incorporate new people into his team (Acts 16:3).
16. They were keen on confronting the prevailing culture (Acts 16: 16-19)
17. They were bold in challenging the religions of the day (Acts 17:2-5; 16-34; Acts 17).
18. Mutual care existed among the church plants with finances being given by new church plants to the needs of Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-27).

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<sup>67</sup> Padilla, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, 89.

19. Reliance on the leadership of the Holy Spirit did not equate to an absence of deliberations, discussions, meetings, conferences, and planning (Acts 14:27; 15:2, 6-12, 22-23).<sup>68</sup>

### **Paul's Mission to Rome**

Tenney writes of Paul: "Already he had eyes on a grander goal than any of the cities that he evangelized previously. Rome beckoned him, for he was a citizen of the empire. If he could reach Rome with the gospel, it could easily disseminate to all parts of the empire, for all road leads to Rome."<sup>69</sup> Rome at that time was the economic and cultural capital of the world. Luke reports that "after all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also" (Acts 19:21; 20:22-24).

The church in Rome appears to have been predominantly Gentile (Rom 1:13) with a small Jewish group (Acts 28:21), who could have been a part of the Gentile congregation, but seem to have been deprived of information concerning the work of Paul and others. Nothing is recorded about the beginning of the church in Rome, although it is safe to assume that they heard the gospel at Pentecost (Acts 2: 10). We also know that Aquila and Priscilla came from Italy (Acts 18:2) and had returned there (Rom 16:3).<sup>70</sup> They were obviously open to receiving Paul and listening to the message of the kingdom of the God he brought (Acts 28:23). Using the Law and the Prophets, he sought to "persuade them about Jesus," but unlike other cities, Paul's outreach to the Jews had limited success here. "Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not

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<sup>68</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 198-271.

<sup>69</sup> Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, 303-304.

<sup>70</sup> Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, 304-305.

believe” (Acts 28:24). This sets the stage for him to take action similar to what he has done in Antioch (Acts 13: 42-48) and Corinth (Acts 18: 1-8); he reaches out to the Jewish community and then the Gentiles. This is done on a theological basis: the offer of the gospel is to be made “to the Jew first” (Acts 13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8).”<sup>71</sup>

The Acts of the Apostles provides timeless principles which if followed could be the difference between success and failure in transforming new communities with the gospel. The example given by Paul in using the team approach to ministry, especially as it relates to planting churches is worthy of note and emulation if the COGOP is to transcend its present dilemma of an inadequate witness to a vast segment of the South Florida population.

### **Reflection on Incarnational Theology**

The prophetic utterances of the Old Testament are always slanted against injustice and the prophetic imagination envisages the time when the oppressed and the marginalized will experience liberation (Isa1:17; Zec 7:9-10; Jer 22:3; Mic 6:8). Eldin Villafañe’s treatment of Amos leaves no doubt as to its central theme of justice, foremost of which, and important to the church, being the matter of “justice and piety of a nation” (Amos 5:21-24).<sup>72</sup> This sense of God’s displeasure with Israel is also conveyed in Isaiah 58:5-7, in which God clearly shows that the “fasting or worship that pleases our God is accompanied by acts of mercy and justice toward the poor, the broken, and the

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<sup>71</sup> Padilla, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, 85.

<sup>72</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 76.

oppressed.”<sup>73</sup> Psalm 82:3 is a reminder to “[d]efend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.” The basis of this justice is God’s righteousness and Orlando Costas believes that Old Testament theology is “culture-bound, historically situated reflection on the God who is known in human language.”<sup>74</sup> He sees a significant shift in the New Testament where “God is known in human flesh.”<sup>75</sup>

For Pentecostal spirituality, like every other spirituality, “if it is to be authentic and relevant it must come to terms with personal and social sin and evil.”<sup>76</sup> This “authentic spirituality affirms the goodness of God’s creation”<sup>77</sup> Villafañe maintains that “the greatest affirmation of creation, culture and its history though is not to be found in the *Imago dei*, but in the Incarnation.”<sup>78</sup> In the incarnation, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), “he being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8).

In *Christ Outside the Gate*, Costas notes that Jesus was fully human, and “identified himself with the poor and oppressed.” He lived a nomadic life and “fearlessly

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<sup>73</sup> Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 77.

<sup>74</sup> Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1982), 5.

<sup>75</sup> Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward a Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 181.

<sup>77</sup> Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 188.

<sup>78</sup> Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit*, 188.

defended the cause of the hurt of his society.”<sup>79</sup> Ronald Sider believes the “gospel creates new persons whose transformed character and action change the world.”<sup>80</sup> Sider is of the view that “Evangelism both results in and aims at social action.”<sup>81</sup> While bemoaning the failure of missionaries to share the full biblical truth with new converts, Sider argues that “[n]othing is more liberating to poor, oppressed folk than the full biblical message that the One who died for their sins is the God of the poor who abhors unjust structures.”<sup>82</sup> Raymond Rivera, in *Liberty to the Captives*, argues “Christ has empowered his body, the church, to carry out its mission (Matt 16:18-19).”<sup>83</sup> Rivera believes this mission is holistic in nature, requiring “a prophetic act of word and deed.”<sup>84</sup> The goal of this is that one “become an instrument that releases God’s power of liberation and life.”<sup>85</sup> Rivera is confident that this approach pushes the church to “engage and confront its community and the powers to help bring about personal and social transformation.”<sup>86</sup> In *Rich Christians*, Sider argues that “only in the Incarnation can we begin to perceive what God’s identification with the weak, oppressed, and poor really means”<sup>87</sup> In *Theology for the Community of God*, Stanley Grenz contends service “is a continuation of the ministry

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<sup>79</sup> Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 174.

<sup>81</sup> Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, 175.

<sup>82</sup> Sider, *Good News and Good Work*, 175.

<sup>83</sup> Raymond Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 18.

<sup>84</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 18.

<sup>85</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 18.

<sup>86</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 18.

<sup>87</sup> Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1990), 47.

of Jesus and a sign of his presence” and while such service could serve as a catalyst for the conversion” of recipients, it should never be used as a means of growing our churches. He urges caution in exercising the correct motives.<sup>88</sup>

### **Establishing His Kingdom**

In *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch argues that in keeping with the *missio dei*, “mission has to be multidimensional in order to be credible and faithful to its origins and character.”<sup>89</sup> Bosch believes that “one way of giving a profile of what mission is and entails might be to look at it terms of six major salvific events portrayed in the New Testament.”<sup>90</sup> These six events he sees as “the incarnation of Christ, his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, his ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the *Parousia*.”<sup>91</sup> Bosch takes issue with the “bourgeois church,” which he believes has lost relevance because it is unwilling to take sides and “believes that it offers a home for masters as well as slaves, rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed,”<sup>92</sup> choosing rather to major on the eschatological expectation of the second coming of Jesus to judge the world (*Parousia*).

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<sup>88</sup> Stanley Grentz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 508.

<sup>89</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 524.

<sup>90</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 524.

<sup>91</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 524.

<sup>92</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 525.

Lukan study reveals “the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of boldness (*parresia*) in the face of adversity and opposition.”<sup>93</sup> Raymond Rivera in *Liberty to the Captives* argues that one cannot rely on any power derived from one’s “own intellect or eloquence, human intuition, or the power of any institution,”<sup>94</sup> but on “God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>95</sup> For Bosch, the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry, prophesied by Isaiah (60:1-2), and announced by Jesus (Luke 4:18-19), “lays claim to a holistic vision that includes His liberating power in an economic context (the poor), a political context (prisoners and oppressed) and a physical context (blind).”<sup>96</sup> In this regard, Bosch opines that the church is indeed a part of the message it proclaims, “in which justice and righteousness are made present and operative.”<sup>97</sup> Tennent sees the church as being sent by Jesus as “an agent of God’s redemptive initiative in the world.”<sup>98</sup> To do so the church must “proclaim and embody the redemption that has been wrought through Christ, but it must intersect with the actual histories and narratives of those to whom we are sent.”<sup>99</sup> Costas believes the church is to follow the pattern of the incarnation “because it is the body of Christ indwelt by his Spirit.”<sup>100</sup> Ed Stetzer meanwhile reinforces the idea that “the kingdom is the focus of

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<sup>93</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 528-529.

<sup>94</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 29.

<sup>95</sup> Rivera, *Liberty to the Captives*, 29.

<sup>96</sup> William Larkin, “Mission Luke,” in *Mission in the New Testament* (New York: Orbis, 1998), 159, quoted in Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 144.

<sup>97</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 529.

<sup>98</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 73.

<sup>99</sup> Tennent, *Invitation to World Mission*, 72.

<sup>100</sup> Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 13.



God's mission."<sup>101</sup> In *Called and Empowered*, Gordon Fee maintains that the "eschatological framework of the kingdom as both 'now' and 'not yet' provides a further theological basis for our global mission."<sup>102</sup>

The gospel narratives reflect Jesus having distinct interactions with various ethnic groups and marginalized people, always declaring the message of the kingdom. First, "He came to that which was his own (Jewish), but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1: 11-12). He cleansed the lepers (Matt 10:8; Luke 17:11-19), the woman with the blood disorder touched him and was healed (Matt 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48), he took children in his arms and blessed them (Matt 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16). He acknowledged that he "was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matt 15:24), but demonstrated repeatedly the entirety of his mission to be the savior of the whole world. Furthermore, the Pauline epistles express the notion of a commonality of all peoples in Christ (1 Cor 12:13; Rom 1:16; Gal 3:26-29).

At the heart of the church's response to the working of the Holy Spirit is the completion of God's mission on the earth. All of scripture portrays the movement of God's people across geographic, racial and ethnic boundaries in order to accomplish His will. It was this spirit that drove humble hearts from the Bahamas and Jamaica to believe that their efforts in South Florida was crucial in the accomplishment of the *missio dei*. Both the Old and New Testaments, and the reflections of various theologians, lend credence to the ministry of these individuals who felt called of God and obeyed. The more diverse nature of the population of South Florida and the strong influence of

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<sup>101</sup> Stetzer, *The Mission of the Church*, 99.

<sup>102</sup> Fee, *Called and Empowered*, 16.

reverse mission suggest that the COGOP could improve its ethnic makeup in South Florida by helping its churches to become more missional through training, and as a result engaging in cross-cultural ministries aimed at winning people of other cultures.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT DESIGN

#### **Introduction**

In the Church of God of Prophecy worldwide, the Global Missions Network consists of over 12,098 churches internationally; more than 13,000 places where the gospel is proclaimed; and active ministry in 135 nations, serving Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and tribal peoples around the world.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, the COGOP remains a small denomination, operating a network of small congregations. With a total membership of 87, 264 members, the denomination operates in 1,830 congregations comprised of 1,728 organized local churches and 102 missions.<sup>2</sup>

Florida remains one of the largest states within the network of churches, both in terms of congregations and membership. There are 135 local churches and missions serving a combined membership in excess of 8,300 or just under 10 percent of the national membership. A major contributor to the strength of the church in Florida has been immigration from the Caribbean and Central America. This study is limited to the English-speaking population and so the statistics are limited to that population. The average number of sixty-one members per congregation is 27 percent above the national average of forty-eight. The tri-counties of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach are comprised of 2123 members or 26 percent of the membership of the state. These are in

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<sup>1</sup> Global Missions Ministries, “About us,” accessed December 16, 2017, <http://www.globalcogop.org/about-us/>.

<sup>2</sup> Global Missions Ministries, “United States of America,” accessed December 16, 2017, <http://www.globalcogop.org/united-states-of-america/>.

thirty congregations with an average congregation size of seventy-one, or 16 percent above the state's average of sixty-one members.

The completion of this project necessitated interaction with various segments of the ministry of the Church of God of Prophecy in the State of Florida. These included the staff of the Administrative Offices, and the District Overseers and pastors in South Florida. Interaction at the State Office was to inform the Administrative Bishop of the scope of the study and to solicit his assistance in any way possible. Secondly, it was used to gather data on the churches within the geographic region being surveyed. The data requested from that office was information for all the churches that were open in 1967 and any information of historic significance that could help in framing the context of this study.

Discussions with the District Overseers were aimed at securing their full cooperation and at soliciting their assistance should the need for a focus group become necessary. Two of the District Overseers are pastors as well, and the third retired recently from the pastoral ministry. Interaction with these Overseers proved invaluable as they were able to provide some of the oral histories, which was crucial since there is no written history for the state, regional or local churches, and two of these Overseers have had long tenures in this region and are second generation ministers. The third, while not having as long a tenure, has seen many of the new plants growing up during his tenure. He also has the title of Church Planter for the Church of God of Prophecy in the State of Florida.

The pastors were crucial to the project's success as they were the primary subjects surveyed. Contact with some of the pastors came with some challenges and the return of

the survey instrument in a timely fashion also proved challenging. These challenges were overcome through telephone calls, emails, text messaging and finally, personal visits. Generally speaking, the pastors were understanding of the process and proved very helpful in completing the survey. Of the thirty pastors in the region, I was successful in making contact with twenty-six, two of whom expressed reservations and were unwilling to complete the survey. They were not prepared to give a reason for their decision not to participate. At the time of writing, one pastor who received the survey has not returned the instrument. Twenty-two returned the survey document, and the Palm Beach County Overseer assisted in completing the instrument for two of the new church plants. The analysis of the survey will, therefore, be based on the information provided by twenty-four of the thirty pastors, covering twenty-four churches in the three counties of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach, the region commonly called South Florida.

The survey instrument was designed with two sections. Section 1 was geared towards capturing quantitative data relating to the local churches, and to a lesser extent the pastor, all with the aim of quantitative testing for the project. These results will be presented in this chapter with supporting Tables 2-6 and Figures 1-6. Section 2 was designed to capture qualitative information which helps in providing answers to the three primary questions of this thesis-project. These questions and responses are covered in this chapter with the help of Tables 8-10.

There was no need for the focus groups, which were factored into the project's design, as there were no major issues expressed by the pastors at the time of distributing the survey instrument. The only pastor who did not return a completed instrument

claimed scheduling issues and time constraints, which affected his ability to research the information and complete the document on a timely basis.

Table 2. List of Churches/Pastors, 1967

		<b>Churches</b>	<b>Pastor's Status</b>	<b>Membership</b>
<b>M I A</b>	1	Coconut Grove	Bahamian	---
	2	Homestead	U.S.A. (NC)	---
	3	Perrine	Bahamian	---
	4	South Miami	Bahamian descent	---
<b>M I</b>	5	Miami*	U.S.A.	---
	6	Allapattah	Bahamian	---
	7	Centerville	Bahamian	---
<b>D A</b>	8	Liberty City	U.S.A. (Georgia)	---
	9	Miami No.1	Bahamian	---
<b>D E</b>	10	Miami No.2	Bahamian	---
	11	Opa Locka	Bahamian descent	---
	12	Ridgeway	Bahamian	---
<b>B R O W</b>	13	Carvers Ranch	Bahamian	16
	14	Ft. Lauderdale	Bahamian	20
	15	Hallandale	Bahamian	---
	16	Hollywood	Bahamian	---
<b>P A L M BCH</b>	17	Belle Glade	Bahamian	---
	18	West Palm Beach	Bahamian	---
	19	West Palm Beach*	U.S.A.	---
	20	Pahokee*	U.S.A.	---
	21	Riviera Beach*	U.S.A.	---

\*Denotes Anglo (whites) only congregation with white pastors.

By 1967 (Table 2) the number of churches within the network had grown to twenty-one.<sup>3</sup> All of the black churches were pioneered by Bahamians. Statistical data for the churches that existed in 1967 were not available at the state office. Only two churches were able to provide 1967 membership data. These churches reflected a growth of 818 and 105 percent respectively. Of the twenty-one churches in 1967, four or 19 percent were led by Caucasians, and their congregations were white. Fifteen or 71.4 percent of

<sup>3</sup> Convention Programs for both South and North Florida of the COGOP held June 21-15, 1967 and July 20-23, 1967 respectively.

the pastors were Bahamians or of Bahamian descent, and the remaining two or 9.5 percent were African Americans. The first Jamaican pastor was appointed in 1969. However, Jamaicans were beginning to take on leadership before then, as the State Treasurer for the 1967 convention of the black churches, R.M. Barrett, held the very important office of State Treasurer.<sup>4</sup> The white churches had a separate Treasurer. Miami-Dade had the largest population, the largest black population and when the church started had twelve congregations, including a single white church, and both African American pastors served in that County. Broward County had only four congregations, all of which were pastored by Bahamians.

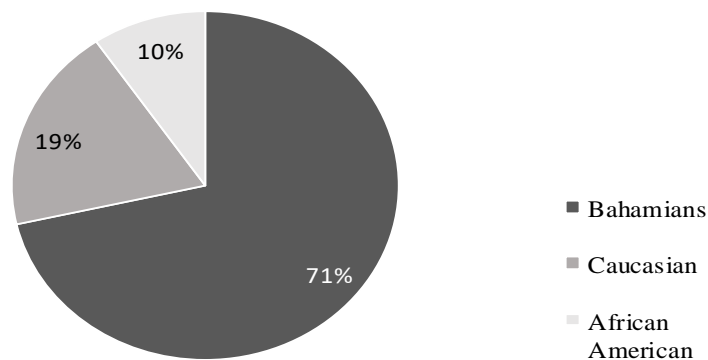


Figure 1. Pastors by Nationality

Of the five congregations in Palm Beach County, three were Caucasian. All the white churches were supervised by a single District Overseer across county lines. In 1967, the churches of Miami-Dade were supervised by two District Overseers, while the churches of Broward and Palm Beach Counties were served by the same Overseer. For

<sup>4</sup> South Florida Forty-Ninth Annual State Convention Program, June 21-25, 1967. This information was verified in an interview on May 18, 2017 with Noward E.C. Dean, District Overseer of Miami-Dade and a second generation pastor.

administrative reasons, four of the Miami-Dade congregations are now in the Broward District, and Palm Beach County has its own District Overseer. Historically, women have featured in the ministry of the Church of God of Prophecy and South Florida has had its fair share. One of the pastors in Miami-Dade is a female and there are three in Palm Beach County, one of whom planted the congregation she now pastors. Broward does not have a female pastor.

### Growth Through Church Planting

Table 3. New Church Plants 1967-2017

		Churches	Planter's Nationality	Year	#s	2017
<b>M D</b>	1	Gould's- Triumphant	Jamaican	1985	14	162
	2	Miracle Deliverance*+	African American	No	Data	
	3	Richmond Heights	Bahamian	No	Data	Clsd
<b>B R O W A R D</b>	4	Deerfield Beach	African American	1982	7	75
	5	Oakland Park	Bahamian	1985	5	200
	6	Sunrise/Lauderhill	Jamaican	1991	5	260
	7	Davie	Jamaican	1993	7	Clsd
	8	Margate+	Jamaican	1990s		Clsd
	9	Sunrise-Higher Ground+	Jamaican	2000s	NO	Data
	10	Lauderhill-Glory Train+	Jamaican	2017	---	17**
<b>P  B</b>	11	Green Acres	Jamaican	1998	14	270
	12	Palm Beach Gdns	Jamaican	1985	6	38
	13	Riviera Bch-Wings of Love	Jamaican	1995	10	56
	14	Wellington	Jamaican	2007	9	17
	15	WPB-Divine	Jamaican	2009	21	60
	16	WPB-Sacred	Jamaican	2011	10	10
	17	Boynton Beach+	Barbadian	1990s		Clsd
	18	Clewiston	African American	2000s	10	12

\*Independent church affiliating with the COGOP \*\*Data received from State Office +Data unavailable  
Key: MD = Miami-Dade PB = Palm Beach Clsd= Closed

During the period under review, there were eighteen new churches planted across the region (see Table 3). The lone church planted by a Jamaican in Miami Dade County was planted in 1985. The planting of the Richmond Heights church, which was



subsequently closed, was carried out by the then District Overseer who was at the time pastor of the Miami No.1 church. The other new church plant reflected for Miami-Dade is actually an independent church, which then sought affiliation with the denomination. Its pastor is African American.

In Broward County, seven churches were planted of which five remain open. Two were planted in the decade of the 80s, three in the decade of the 90s and the other two were planted in the last two decades. Two of these were disbanded. One was disbanded because the founding pastor left the movement and became independent. Members of that congregation who opted to remain with the church were transferred to another of the new church plants. The second was disbanded when its founding pastor assumed the pastorate of a long-standing and more established congregation within the network. Of these seven new church plants, five of the church planters were Jamaicans, one Bahamian and the other an African American.

In Palm Beach County, eight congregations were planted. Six of the church planters were Jamaicans, one was a Barbadian and the other an African American. The church planted by the Barbadian was later pastored by a Jamaican, but eventually went independent. The West Palm Beach church previously named Sacred Mission was recently renamed New Beginnings under the leadership of the District Overseer following the departure of the last pastor. The White Belle Glade congregation, which was closed, has since been relaunched under the leadership of an African American with a black congregation. The information for two of the churches planted in this area was provided by the Palm Beach County or District Three Overseer, who currently serves as

the interim pastor for one of these churches and is working closely with the other to ensure its success.

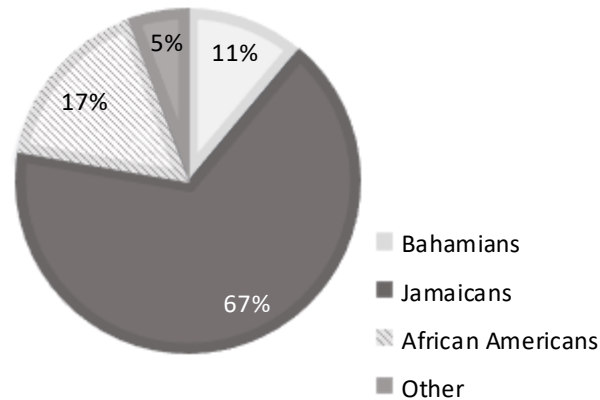


Figure 2. Church Planters by Nationality, 1967-2017

Of the eighteen churches planted during the period, 67 percent were planted by Jamaicans (Figure 2). African Americans account for three, or 17 percent, and Bahamians two, or 11 percent. Of the new churches remaining open, composition by the nationalities of immigrants reflects a co-relationship between the nationality of the church planter and its members. The lone church planted by a Bahamian that remains open is an exception, however, as it is now predominantly Jamaican. Of the eleven new churches reporting, eight have congregations with a Jamaican population ranging between 84 and 100 percent. Of the other three, the Jamaican population is 50, 74 and 75 percent respectively (Table 4). The church planted by a Bahamian has a 90 percent Jamaican population, which is an increase of 40 percent since 1985 when it was planted. A similar situation exists at the church planted by the African American in Broward, with a 74 percent Jamaican membership. At its founding in 1982, the church had 37.5 percent of its

membership as Jamaicans, while the Bahamians accounted for 25 percent and “Other” accounting for the remaining 37.5 percent. Bahamians now only account for 1 percent.

Table 4. List of Churches, 2017

		Churches	Nationality of Pastors	Dec 2017	Date of Plant
<b>M</b>	1	Homestead*	African American	38**	----
<b>I</b>	2	Perrine	Bah. Descent	57	1953
<b>A</b>	3	South Miami-Higher Prais	Turks Islander	47	1939
<b>M</b>	4	Goulds-Triumphant	Jamaican	162	1985
<b>I</b>	5	Miracle Deliverance++	African American	No	Data
	6	Miami 19 <sup>th</sup> Ave	Jamaican	90	1964
<b>D</b>	7	Centerville	Jamaican	44	1952
<b>A</b>	8	Miami No.1*	Bahamian	98**	----
<b>D</b>	9	Opa Locka- Love Fellowshi	Jamaican	93	1952
<b>E</b>	10	Ridgeway	Jamaican	89	1922
<b>B</b>	11	Carvers Ranch- Sure Found	African American	147	1947
<b>R</b>	12	Ft. Lauderdale	Jamaican	41	1949
<b>O</b>	13	Hallandale	Jamaican	42	1920s
<b>W</b>	14	Deerfield Beach	Jamaican	75	1982
<b>A</b>	15	Oakland Park	Bahamian	200	1985
<b>R</b>	16	Lauderhill/Sunrise	Jamaican	260	1991
<b>D</b>	17	Sunrise- Higher Ground++	African American	Data	2000s
	18	Lauderhill-Glory Train+	Jamaican	17**	2017
	19	Hollywood+	Bah Descent	47	1926
<b>P</b>	20	Belle Glade-12 <sup>th</sup> St Min.	African American	30	----
<b>A</b>	21	Green Acres	Jamaican	270	1998
<b>L</b>	22	Belle Glade-Ave A	Jamaican	No	Data
<b>M</b>	23	Riviera Bch- Wings of	Jamaican	56	1995
	24	Wellington	Jamaican	17	2007
<b>B</b>	25	Palm Beach Gardens	Jamaican	38	1985
<b>E</b>	26	WPB- Divine	Jamaican	60	2009
<b>A</b>	27	WPB- New Beginnings	Jamaican	10	1911
<b>C</b>	28	Pahokee	Jamaican	60	1932
<b>H</b>	29	Riviera Beach+	U.S.A.	23	1940s
	30	Clewiston	African American	12	2012

\*Denotes non-participation of the pastor. \*\*Information accessed from State Office reports July 2017.

+ Survey not returned. ++ Unable to contact pastor.

Over the period, of the churches that existed in 1967, Allapattah, Liberty City, and Coconut Grove were closed and all of the White congregations ceased to operate in their original format. The White Miami church is now pastored by a Jamaican and the congregation is now made up of 36.5 percent Bahamians and 50 percent Jamaica. The leadership is 100 percent Jamaican. The Pahokee church is now a black church, pastored by a Jamaican with a membership that is 100 percent Jamaican. Riviera Beach is a diverse congregation that is becoming increasingly Caribbean and the pastor is Caucasian. The Miami No. 2 church is now a French-speaking congregation catering to the Haitian community, as that entire region is commonly called “little Haiti.” The new churches planted during the period were given full treatment earlier, under the section entitled, “Growth Through Church Planting.”

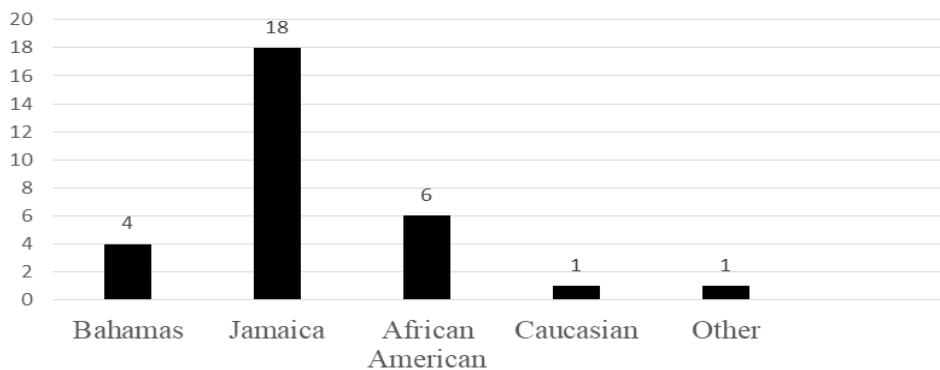


Figure 3. Pastors by Nationality, 2017

The diversity in the pastoral leadership of the churches reflects the diverse nationalities of the congregations, with Jamaicans again showing dominance (Figure 3). They account for 60 percent of all pastors, while African Americans account for 20 percent, and

Bahamians for 13 percent. There is only one Caucasian pastor and one from the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Table 5. Membership Distribution by Age 2017

Churches			1967				2017			
			Under 20yrs	21- 40yrs	41-60 Yrs	61yrs & Over	Und er 20yr	21- 40yr	41- 60yrs	61yrs & Over
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>M</b>	1	Homestead*	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
<b>I</b>	2	Perrine	---	---	---	---	9	23	25	43
<b>A</b>	3	South Miami-Higher Praise	---	---	---	---	5	30	60	5
<b>M</b>	4	Goulds	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	28	22	34	16
<b>I</b>	5	Miracle Deliverance+	No	Data				No	Data	
	6	Miami 19 <sup>th</sup> Ave	---	---	---	---	15	26	29	30
<b>D</b>	7	Centerville	---	---	---	---	0	7	40	53
<b>A</b>	8	Miami No.1*	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
<b>D</b>	9	Opa Locka- Love Fell	---	---	---	---	4	33	31	23
<b>E</b>	10	Ridgeway	---	---	---	---	2	17	58	23
<b>B</b>	11	Carvers Ranch- Sure Found	10	50	30	10	10	40	30	20
<b>R</b>	12	Ft. Lauderdale	---	---	---	---	24	5	48	23
<b>O</b>	13	Hallandale	---	---	---	---	No	---	Data	---
<b>W</b>	14	Deerfield Beach	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	15	10	70
<b>A</b>	15	Oakland Park	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	25	30	25
<b>R</b>	16	Lauderhill/Sunrise	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	14	38	44
<b>D</b>	17	Sunrise- Higher Ground+	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	---	No	Data	---
	18	Lauderhill-Glory Train+	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	---	No	Data	---
	19	Hollywood	---	---	---	---	0	50	25	25
<b>P</b>	20	Belle Glade-12 <sup>th</sup> St Min.	---	---	---	---	30	20	35	15
<b>A</b>	21	Green Acres	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	22	52	17
<b>L</b>	22	Belle Glade-Ave A	No	Data		n/a		No	Data	
<b>M</b>	23	Riviera Bch- Wings of	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	15	40	40
	24	Wellington	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20	25	50	15
<b>B</b>	25	Palm Beach Gdns	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	5	84	11
<b>E</b>	26	WPB- Divine	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	15	70	5
<b>A</b>	27	WPB- Sacred /New Beg.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		No	Data	
<b>C</b>	28	Pahokee	---	---	---	---	10	10	50	30
<b>H</b>	29	Riviera Beach	---	---	---	---	9	4	30	57
	30	Clewiston	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		No	Data	

\*Church did not participate      +No Data to analyze

The membership by age of the South Florida churches reflects an aging community (Table 5). Only three of the twenty-one, or 14 percent of churches that

provided this information, have a population of twenty years and under that represents 25 percent or more of their total membership. Seventeen, or 81 percent, of these twenty-one churches have less than 25 percent of congregants aged 20 and under. Of these, eleven, or 52 percent of these churches, report this category of their membership is less than 10 percent.

For members in the age group twenty-one to forty-years old, six, or 29 percent of churches have populations of 25 percent or more, with the highest of these representing 37 percent of their membership. Thirteen churches, or 62 percent, have a membership of twenty-one to forty year olds that represents less than 25 percent of their congregation. Five, or 24 percent of churches, have below 10 percent of their congregation falling within this category. Only one church has 50 percent or more of its members who are between twenty-one and forty. In the category forty-one to sixty years, twenty, or 95 percent of these churches, have 25 percent or more of their members in this age group. Three of these churches have 60-80 percent of their members who are forty-one to sixty years old. Four of them have 50-58 percent, three have 40-49 percent and for another seven, 30-39 percent of their congregations are in this group. The size of the age group sixty-one years and over is a clear indication of the aging population within these churches. Eleven, or 52 percent of the churches, have 25 percent or more of their members who have attained this age. Of the ten churches with less than 25 percent of their members over sixty years of age, three have more than 20 percent of their congregation in this age group.

### Leadership Training and Development

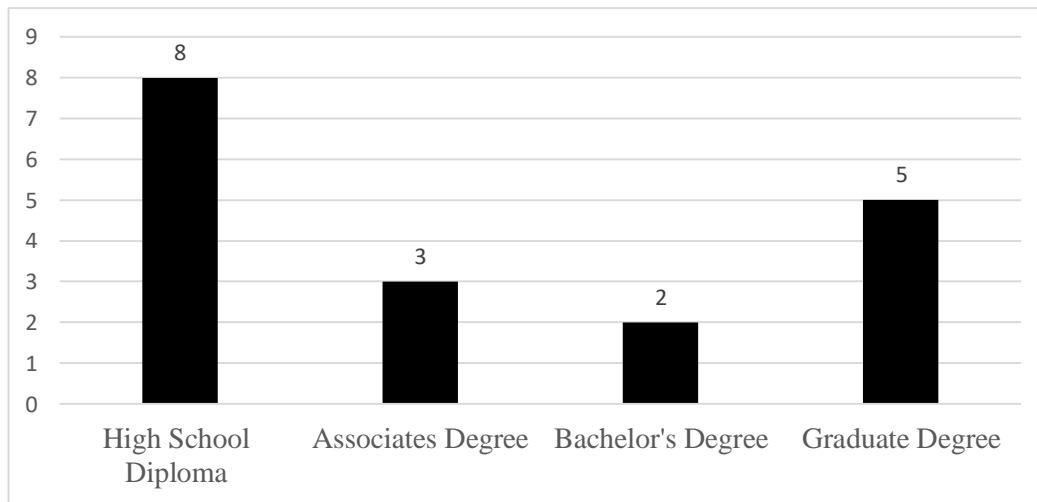
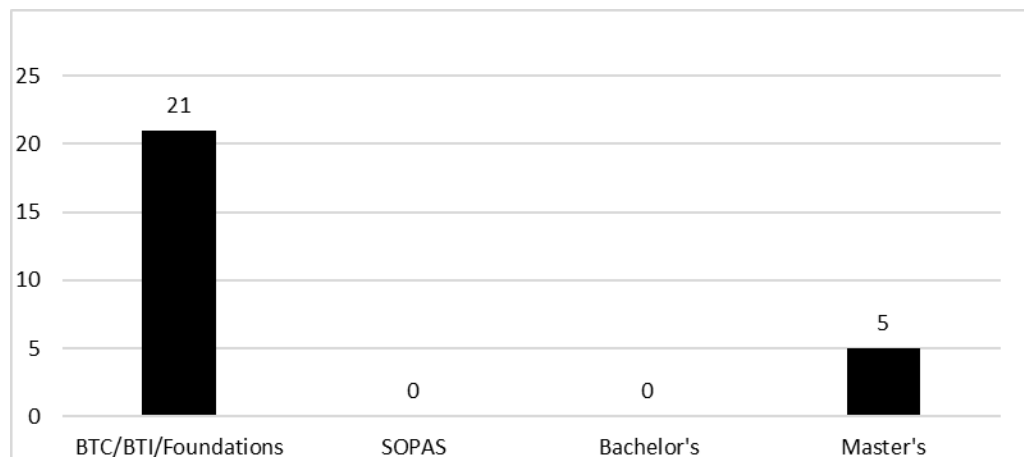


Figure 4. Formal Educational Level of Pastors

Of the twenty pastors responding to this question, 40 percent are high school graduates. Figure 4 shows 25 percent of all pastors as having attained graduate degrees, while 15 percent have Associate's degrees, and 10 percent are holders of Bachelor's degrees.



Key: BTI/BTC = Bible Training Institute/Bible Training Camp  
SOPAS = School of Practical and Advanced Studies

Figure 5. Theological Education of Pastors

Twenty-one pastors report completing the prescribed courses of study required for entry into the ministry of the COGOP (Figure 5). Of the twenty-one respondents, five, or 24 percent, hold advanced theological degrees. Two others are registered in formal theological training in fully accredited programs, one of which is the consortium arrangement the church has with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

### **The Cross-cultural Milieu**

The statistical data for 1967 is incomplete, as mentioned earlier (See Table 6). However, of the four churches that provided data for that year, three reflect a membership composition of 100 percent Bahamians and the other had 70 percent Bahamian membership with 30 percent “Other,” and no Jamaicans in that congregation. The 2017 data reflect a drastic change in the composition of the membership of these three churches. The three churches that reported a 100 percent Bahamian population in 1967, now report a Jamaican population in excess of 80 percent each, and Bahamians constitute 10 percent or less of each of those congregations. The church that had a 70 percent Bahamian membership is now a diverse black church of Bahamians (40 percent), Jamaicans (40 percent) and “Other” (20 percent).

The Pahokee church which started out as white in 1939 was reporting a diverse congregation by 1967 with only 70 percent of the congregants being Caucasians. They were unable to provide a breakdown of countries of origin of the 30 percent black membership.



Table 6. Membership Distribution by Nationality, 1967-2017

Churches			1967			2017		
			Bah %	Jam %	Oth %	Bah %	Jam %	Oth %
<b>M</b>	1	Homestead*	---	----	----	----	----	----
<b>I</b>	2	Perrine	-----	-----	----	31	38	31
<b>A</b>	3	South Miami-Higher Praise	100	0	0	10	85	5
<b>M</b>	4	Goulds	---	----	----	24	75	1
<b>I</b>	5	Miracle Deliverance	No	Data		No	Data	
	6	Miami 19 <sup>th</sup> Ave	0	0	100	36.	50	14
<b>D</b>	7	Centerville	100	0	0	0	80	20
<b>A</b>	8	Miami No.1*		-----			-----	
<b>D</b>	9	Opa Locka- Love Fell	---	----	---	17	39	44
<b>E</b>	10	Ridgeway	---	---	----	23	13	64
<b>B</b>	11	Carvers Ranch- Sure F	70	0	30	40	40	20
<b>R</b>	12	Ft. Lauderdale	100	0	0	5	83	12
<b>O</b>	13	Hallandale				57	36	7
<b>W</b>	14	Deerfield Beach	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	74	25
<b>A</b>	15	Oakland Park				5	90	5
<b>R</b>	16	Lauderhill/Sunrise	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	92	7
<b>D</b>	17	Sunrise- Higher Ground	No	Data		No	Data	
	18	Lauderhill-Glory Train	No	Data		No	Data	
	19	Hollywood	No	Data		No	Data	
<b>P</b>	20	Belle Glade-12 <sup>th</sup> St Min.				0	90	10
<b>A</b>	21	Green Acres	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	93	5
<b>L</b>	22	Belle Glade-Ave A	No	Data		No	Data	
<b>M</b>	23	Riviera Bch- Wings of	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	91	9
	24	Wellington	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	100	0
<b>B</b>	25	Palm Beach Gdns	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	84	11
<b>E</b>	26	WPB- Divine	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	95	5
<b>A</b>	27	WPB- Sacred	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	100	0
<b>C</b>	28	Pahokee	Unkn	own	70	0	90	10
<b>H</b>	29	Riviera Beach	---	---	---	25	50	25
	30	Clewiston	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	50	50

\*Denotes non-participation of pastor

The 2017 statistics across South Florida reflect a significant change in the immigrant communities in the churches (Table 6). All the churches reflect diversity in terms of nationality or descent, one of them also reports that 2 percent of their membership is white.

Only three of the churches in South Florida report Caucasian members. One started as a white church, but now has a diverse population of 50 percent Jamaicans, 25

percent Bahamians and 25 percent whites. The pastor is a second generation female Caucasian pastor. One church reports a 2 percent Caucasian membership, and the other reports a single Caucasian through marriage.

### **Nationality of Local Leadership**

Eighteen, or 60 percent of all pastors, report being Jamaican or of Jamaican descent, while six or 20 percent of all pastors are African Americans. Four, or 13.33 percent, of all pastors are Bahamians and there is one from the Turks and Caicos Islands (Figure 6). There is one Caucasian pastor.

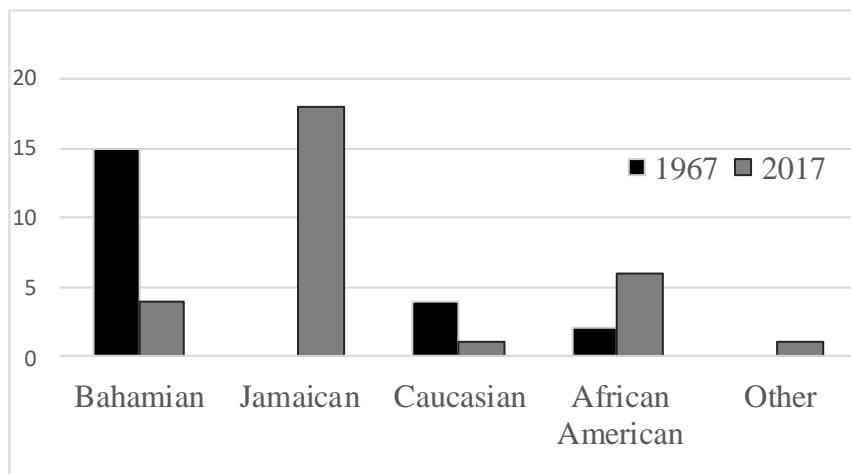


Figure 6. Pastors by Nationality, 1967 – 2017

Table 7. Leadership Distribution by Nationality, 2017

Churches			2017		
			Bah %	Jam %	Oth %
<b>M D</b>	1	Perrine	25	25	50
	2	South Miami-Higher Praise	1	98	1
	3	Goulds	15	85	0
	4	Miami 19 <sup>th</sup> Ave	0.	100	0
	5	Centerville	0	80	20
	6	Opa Locka- Love Fell	20	55	25
	7	Ridgeway	38	24	38
<b>B R O W A R D</b>	8	Carvers Ranch- Sure F	30	40	30
	9	Ft. Lauderdale	10	70	20
	10	Hallandale	50	50	0
	11	Deerfield Beach	0	80	20
	12	Oakland Park	5	94	1
	13	Lauderhill/Sunrise	0	100	0
	14	Hollywood	80	10	10
<b>P B</b>	15	Belle Glade-12 <sup>th</sup> St Min.	0	100	0
	16	Green Acres	0	100	0
	17	Riviera Bch- Wings of	0	90	10
	18	Wellington	0	100	0
	19	Palm Beach Gdns	0	100	0
	20	WPB- Divine	0	95	5

Key: MD- Miami-Dade PB- Palm Beach

Of the twenty-one churches that existed in 1967, sixteen remain open. Fourteen of these participated in the survey, but not all provided statistical data on the composition of their leadership based on nationality in 1967 (Table 7). Two of the previously white churches have 100 percent Jamaican leadership to support their Jamaican and African American pastors.

Of the black churches, one reflects a leadership group made up of 98 percent Jamaicans over a membership of 85 percent Jamaicans, and a pastor from the Turks and Caicos Islands. Two others have 70 percent Jamaican leadership, and membership of these churches is 83 and 80 percent Jamaican respectively. The remaining five of these churches all have a more diverse leadership in their congregations, and are also far more

diverse in composition. Three of these churches are pastored by Jamaicans and they are supported by leadership teams which are only 55, 50 and 24 percent Jamaican respectively. Bahamians account for 20, 50 and 38 percent of the cadre of leaders respectively. “Other” accounts for people of other nationalities, including African Americans and Caucasians. The more diverse memberships in the remaining two churches have leadership teams consistent with the composition of their congregations. Twenty-five percent Bahamians and Jamaicans support the 50 percent of “Other” leaders in what is probably the most diverse of the congregations. The pastor of this church is of Bahamian descent and is a female. The last of these churches is pastored by an African American and the congregation there has a 40 percent Bahamian and Jamaican population. The leadership team is very balanced as well, with 40 percent being Jamaican. The Bahamians and “Other” category constitute 30 percent of those who serve in leadership capacities at these local churches.

Of the churches that were planted since 1967, eight provided data for this section of the survey instrument. The only church planted in Miami-Dade has a leadership team that is 85 percent Jamaican, with the Bahamians providing the remaining 15 percent to complete the leadership group of this church. In Broward County, of the three churches that completed this section, Jamaican dominance is again reflected. One is led by 100 percent Jamaicans and the other two have 80 and 94 percent of their leadership who are Jamaicans. The remaining leadership are 20 percent Jamaican for one and the leadership team is comprised of 5 percent Bahamians and the non-Bahamians making up the remaining 1 percent. Of the four churches in Palm Beach County, three have 100 percent

Jamaican leadership groups. The final church has a 95 percent Jamaican leadership and the balance is made up of non-Bahamians.

Table 8. Reasons for the Dominance of Bahamians and Jamaicans

	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
2.	I have been influenced by the COGOP from childhood	14	2	1	3	1
5.	People of all races and nationality attend our worship services	4	7	6	3	1
11.	So-called “white” music could fit into our worship services	5	10	5	2	1
17.	Persons involved in evangelism and outreach are trained to reach people of other nationalities	5	5	5	3	1
19.	Our church is careful in incorporating peoples of all cultures in leadership roles and leading worship	7	8	5	1	0
20.	Musical selection at our church is especially geared towards the older members	1	1	3	13	3
21.	A person from another culture or race would feel comfortable worshipping at our church	9	8	3	1	0
27.	Worship at our church employs both traditional hymns and contemporary songs	12	8	0	1	0
28.	COGOP has programs aimed at helping churches do evangelism to people of all culture	4	5	4	5	2
30.	Appointment of Caucasian pastors could help in reaching other cultures or ethnicity	3	7	7	2	2
33.	We are deliberate in our efforts to reach people of Jamaican/Bahamian descent	4	4	1	9	3
35.	Worship music is distinctly Afro-Caribbean	2	2	2	12	3

All of the churches planted in South Florida prior to 1967 were planted by Bahamians and Caucasians. Since 1967, Jamaicans have dominated the planting of new COGOP congregations, particularly in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Sixteen or 73 percent of pastors who participated in the survey have been influenced by the COGOP from childhood.

Only eight, or 36 percent of churches, are deliberate in their attempt to reach people of their own nationalities and a vast majority of them are deliberate in creating an environment that could prove offensive to people of other nationalities, races or cultures. While they believe that people of other cultures are comfortable worshipping with them, they have had very limited success in winning these others to membership within their respective congregations. Only two churches report marginal success in winning whites or Hispanics to their congregations. The vast majority of members represented as “Other” from the survey are blacks from other Caribbean islands. Included in this are some Haitians and Hispanics who opt to worship in congregations where English is the dominant language.

Fifteen or 68 percent of the churches are careful not to use a music form that is distinctly Afro-Caribbean, and an equal number use traditional hymns and music usually associated with “white’s worship.” A majority (77 percent) of pastors believe people of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds would be comfortable worshipping in their church. While the pastors/churches remain conscious of the need to be sensitive to cultural dynamics, their efforts at overcoming the challenges they pose could be enhanced with specialized training by the denomination for pastors and others involved in evangelism and outreach. Ten or 45 percent of the pastors are of the opinion that the appointment of Caucasian pastors in the region could help in reaching people of other cultures. Seven or 32 percent remain neutral on the subject.

Table 9. Reasons for Poor Growth of the COGOP in South Florida

	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	I am comfortable ministering to people of all races or cultures	15	6	1	0	0
	My church is visible in our community and we	10	9	2	1	0
3.	work closely with people of other races					
7.	Our evangelism efforts include the involvement of the laity.	9	10	1	3	0
12.	All of our outreach and evangelism efforts are properly promoted using electronic, print and social media.	3	11	3	3	3
13.	My church is located in a community that all race feels comfortable visiting	7	7	5	3	0
14.	Fasting and praying are the key ingredients to church growth	14	4	2	1	1
15.	It is too costly to promote all of our outreach activities	2	4	6	5	5
16.	Our church is involved with other churches in spreading the gospel	8	10	2	2	0
24.	Programs of social intervention are integral to the gospel witness	4	10	7	1	0
25.	The local church has invested in training the youth population for outreach and evangelism	1	11	4	4	1
31.	My church operates primarily on volunteerism	14	7	0	1	0
32.	There is an organized program of evangelism at the local church	2	9	11	7	2

Not unlike other movements, the COGOP has had its fair share of success in growing its base in South Florida, primarily through church planting. It has not seen a corresponding growth in the size of its individual units. McGavran, in *Understanding Church Growth*, helps in our comprehension of this when he makes the following point: “Sometimes growth stops because the kind of converts who constituted the first source of growth is no longer available, and the church does not seek a second source.”<sup>5</sup>

Of the twenty-two pastors who completed and returned the survey instrument, twenty-one, or 95 percent, feel comfortable ministering to all races and cultures and they

<sup>5</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 99.

work to keep their church visible in their communities. While fourteen of the churches ensure laity involvement in their evangelism efforts, only eight of these have an organized program for evangelizing their communities. Three of these did not take a position on the costliness of conducting outreach activities, nine believe it is too costly. However, eleven reported the promotion of their outreach efforts using the media in some form or another.

Of the pastors who responded, fifteen, or 68 percent, believe that social action is an integral part of the gospel witness. Seven or 32 percent were neutral. Twenty-one or 95 percent of the churches operate on volunteerism. The majority of the churches appear open to uniting with other churches in sharing the gospel. Eighteen or 82 percent of the twenty-two respondents report that they are involved with other churches in sharing the gospel. Only two are not involved with other churches, and the final two were neutral in their responses. Most of the churches believe they are visible to their communities. Nineteen, or 86 percent, either strongly agree or agree. Two, or 9 percent, were neutral in their responses, while only one pastor believes his church is not visible to his community.



Table 10. Challenges to the Growth and Development of the COGOP in South Florida

	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
4	Our church is very careful in utilizing a "race-neutral" language in our worship services	10	11	1	1	0
6.	Sermon illustrations are distinctly Caribbean	1	2	5	11	3
8.	Story lines used in sermons are identifiable by the locals	8	10	3	2	0
9.	We consciously chose speakers and singers who are able to minister across cultures	8	13	1	1	0
10.	Finances are not a deterrent to us doing evangelism and outreach	4	9	2	5	3
18.	The church facilities are inviting, has adequate parking and facilities to minister to children and youths	11	9	1	2	1
22.	Young people are incorporated into our programming and leadership decision making	4	15	1	2	0
23.	My local church does not need any financial help	0	0	2	7	14
26.	My local church has been deliberate in trying to reach all ethnic groups.	6	9	4	3	1
29.	The local church carries a mortgage or is paying lease	9	2	0	1	5
34.	The cost for using technology and media in church outreach and evangelism is too expensive	5	5	1	9	3
36.	The church and its ministry activities are properly promoted in the media and social media.	1	7	4	9	2

Table 10 provides the responses to the segment of the survey that seeks to answer the third question of this thesis-project. The aim is to determine some of the challenges faced by these immigrant pastors and their congregations and to ascertain the extent to which they are aware of the challenges these issues pose. This is especially true for those who were not born in the United States of America. The diverse South Florida population requires that missionaries and churches remain sensitive to their demographics and their cultural realities. The pastors of the COGOP appear to be sensitive to these realities. Of the pastors who responded, 88 percent exercise care in maintaining a “race-neutral” environment in their worship services. They are aware of this, and so 64 percent of them make an effort to ensure their sermon illustrations are not based on their Caribbean

culture, and 82 percent use language and storylines that are easily identifiable by the locals they are trying to reach with the gospel. They go further, as 91 percent carefully select speakers and visiting ministers who are capable of ministering cross-culturally.

Most of the pastors (57 percent) report that finances are a challenge to their ability to do evangelism and outreach and inspire the growth of their congregations. None of the pastors believe that they do not need financial help. Two remained neutral and twenty-one, or 91 percent, admit to needing financial help. This is born out of the fact that as many as 48 percent carry a mortgage or have to pay a lease. The financial constraints certainly have an impact on their ability to promote their outreach activities. While they are equally divided on whether or not it is too costly to promote their activities through the media, 50 percent admit to not using the media to properly promote the activities of their congregations. The pastors are in agreement that outreach is crucial to growing their churches. In excess of 65 percent report being deliberate in their outreach activities aimed at reaching other ethnic groups. Nineteen, or 86 percent, are also conscious of the importance of the youth population and include them in their programming and decision-making process.

### **Conclusion**

The exercise has been both enlightening and challenging. The interaction with the pastors provided an opportunity to build meaningful friendships and hopefully opened doors for future dialogue on some of the issues covered by the survey. By national standards, all of the churches surveyed are considered small churches, with the exception

of three, which are considered mid-sized.<sup>6</sup> These must operate and survive in a community that has its fair share of megachurches and large churches, which more often than not trigger a sense of panic and despair among pastors who are struggling to grow their churches. They should “learn to stop worrying about how many people show(ed) up for Sunday services.”<sup>7</sup>

The leadership of the COGOP in South Florida needs to recapture the “enthusiastic, evangelical style of preaching and ability to motivate and stimulate exuberant celebration of Christ,”<sup>8</sup> said of one of its most successful former pastors and District Overseers, Herman E. Dean. This comment embodies the missional Pentecostal zeal that characterized the movement in its infancy. The churches must also become intentional in their efforts to win people of other cultures and ethnicities. McManus sees this as only one of two legs, the other being acceleration, with both creating velocity. He believes that it is important to “move with spiritual velocity, with a clear sense of God’s calling, with clarity of vision, and with a heart of that moves with immediate obedience to the Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> McManus is correct in believing that “movement will not happen if people do not move together in common mission.” This is the task of the leadership of the COGOP churches of South Florida: to mobilize their individual units to move in unison to reach the unchurched in what is now a post-Christian, post-modern world.

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Vaters, *The Grasshopper Myth: Big Churches, Small Churches and the Small Thinking that Divides Us* (United States: New Small Church, 2012), 35-36.

<sup>7</sup> Vaters, *The Grasshopper Myth*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Kevan Dean and Terry L. Brown, *Ezekiel: Yuma’s Native Son* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2011), 79.

<sup>9</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had In Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 76.

## CHAPTER 5

### OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

This study of the Churches of God of Prophecy in South Florida was undertaken with some trepidation. At the heart of the concern was the potential unwillingness of critical parts of the church's constituency to complete a survey or to share relevant historic and current information. This apprehension was quickly allayed as the State Overseer and his staff went the extra mile to ensure that the information they possessed was made available. The pastors in the region, except in a few cases, were very co-operative in completing the survey.

This thesis-project is a study of the growth of the COGOP in South Florida over the last fifty years, with an emphasis on the influence of immigrants from the Bahamas and Jamaica on that growth. To complete the thesis-project successfully, several literary sources were examined and the inferences from these sources, along with the outcome of a field survey, provide the answers to the three questions of this thesis-project.

These questions and answers are detailed below and the conclusion also includes a brief recommendation that will hopefully, if implemented, propel the Church of God of Prophecy in South Florida towards growth in fulfilling its mission: "Empowered by the Holy Spirit, through prayer, we will plant churches and equip leaders to carry out the biblical mandate to make genuine disciples of all peoples of the world, to the glory of Christ our Lord, Head of the church."<sup>1</sup> Finally, it is hoped that others will be motivated to

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial of the *White Wing Messenger*, the official bi-monthly publication of the Church of God of Prophecy, 94, no. 6 (January 2018), 3.

bring further scholarship to bear on the issues that affect the ministry of the churches. Christ our Lord, Head of the church.”<sup>2</sup> Finally, it is hoped that others will be motivated to bring further scholarship to bear on the issues that affect the ministry of the churches.

### **Navigating the Growth Curve**

Historically, much of the discussion on church growth centers on numerical growth. The result of this is often a negative stigmatization of smaller congregations. That the COGOP in South Florida has grown numerically over the past fifty years is indisputable. However, there is room for argument about the extent of this growth, the pace at which it is achieved, and the faithfulness of the church in its commitment to reach “all nations” as a part of its mission and growth strategy. At best, the growth must be seen as slow incremental growth made possible because of immigration. While acknowledging the importance of slow growth, Donald McGavran is quick to point out that this pattern, among others, are “growth-arresting concepts.”<sup>3</sup> Slow growth results in apathy and this is perpetuated because of the tendency of people to be caught up with “glorifying slow growth.”<sup>4</sup> The tendency for COGOP congregations to remain small can be attributed to this weakness. This “glorifying of slow growth” creates an atmosphere in which the movement refuses to acknowledge this as a fact, choosing instead to excuse the reality by highlighting perceived weaknesses in the theology and polity of other movements, especially those who have successfully broken the small church barrier in

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<sup>2</sup> Editorial of the *White Wing Messenger*, the official bi-monthly publication of the Church of God of Prophecy, 94, no. 6 (January 2018), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 119.

<sup>4</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 119.

establishing mega-churches. Not only does the COGOP need to acknowledge this, it must also be willing to break the barriers through honest, well thought out and intentional strategies aimed at overcoming the various obstacles.

### **Denominational Influence on Church Growth in South Florida**

Church growth involves more than simply numerical growth, and in this regard the COGOP has demonstrated a measure of growth in its theology, its polity and its willingness to work alongside other Christian groups to spread the gospel. This is a far cry from its earlier exclusive and anti-ecumenical stance. Theologically, the churches in South Florida have embraced the position that women have a place in the Christian ministry. Currently, four, or 13 percent, of the pastors in South Florida are women, one of whom serves on the State Ministerial Review Board, which is set up to examine all persons recommended by their local churches for licensing and ordination. These women are excluded from being ordained as bishops however.

Rooted in classical Pentecostalism, the theology of the COGOP is distinctly Wesleyan and traces its evolution through the Holiness movement. The church's theological orientation is characterized by its affirmation of the biblical doctrines of justification by faith, entire sanctification of the believer as a second act of grace, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues, the pre-millennial second coming of Christ, and the restoration of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, including divine healing.

Historically, the COGOP prided itself on being non-creedal, but was keen on developing a distinct doctrinal position identified as "The Twenty-nine Important Bible

Truths.” It also created a litany of rules under the name of “Advice to Members,” and covering a plethora of issues relating to personal conduct. This advice covered various topics including matters of dress, dietary restrictions, and inter-personal relationships, and has been cited by many as the reason why they would never become members of this church. Since the 1990s, the church has downplayed this Advice to Members and has made significant changes in at least two of the twenty-nine points of doctrine. Teaching on the use of “Gold for Ornament” has been adjusted to allow the marriage ring as a cultural symbol and is now identified under the new moniker, “Adornment.” The teaching “Against Divorce and Remarriage Evil” has seen changes aimed at correcting erroneous interpretations of sexual sins and at addressing the vexing difficulty posed when a divorcee comes to faith in Christ. Both of these teachings, coupled with the Advice to Members, were always viewed by others outside the movement as being extra-biblical and more in keeping with the rural beginnings of the church, effectively preventing many people from becoming members of the churches.

Members have in fact moved beyond the changes to those two teachings. Members now wear all types of jewelry and they are not disqualified from membership, and even persons who are already members, including ministers, are divorcing while remaining in full fellowship with the church. The extent to which these changes have impacted the numerical growth of the movement is yet to be quantified.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In order to complete a meaningful study, it is crucial that one has data that is relevant to the purpose of the study and that answers the basic questions of the thesis. The

survey used was designed to capture this information. Given the fact that this study is the only one known to have been done among these churches, extra care had to be taken not to offend the pastors who were being surveyed, without compromising the integrity and veracity of the study. This caution was deemed important, since the outcome of this study could determine the willingness of these leaders to become involved in any future study, which they may consider an attack on their ministry. For this reason the age of pastors was omitted, for example. Such sensitive information, if captured, would have enabled a more critical analysis of the relationship between growth, pastoral tenure and pastor's age. The gathering of information of a more critical nature could also render the study more meaningful to various stakeholders from a management and forecasting standpoint.

The lack of proper records and a more detailed reporting requirement for the churches at all levels negatively impacted the researcher's ability to carry out a better analysis of the growth of the movement. Consequently, much of the growth was measured in terms of the number of churches planted. The statistical data for both 1967 and 2017, provided by just two churches, was not sufficient for a proper comparative study on the actual growth of the numbers of persons who are members of the church, nor did it allow for a proper ethnographic study.

In retrospect, a parallel study among the laity of the churches in the region may have proved helpful in answering the questions of this study, since their perspective may not necessarily mirror that of their pastors. At the same time, the pastors' responses could have been influenced by a perception that the survey was aimed at assessing their effectiveness. The laity's response could, in that case, provide balance to their responses. A third group that could have been included is members of the community who are not a



part of the church, and which could have served as an effective control to the process. The outcomes of the study are detailed below.

### **Dominance of Bahamians and Jamaicans in COGOP**

At the heart of this study is the contribution of Bahamians and Jamaicans to the growth and development of the COGOP in South Florida, i.e., the counties of Miami Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach. The contributions of the immigrant Bahamian and Jamaican communities to this growth is irrefutable. Their dominance in the membership stems from the pioneering efforts of early immigrants in planting these congregations. Both the Bahamians and the Jamaicans came to South Florida in search of a better way of life. The need for cheap labor in the United States, economic hardships in their countries, proximity to South Florida, shared climatic conditions and a legal vehicle, “The Contract” work permit for farm workers, opened the door for the first immigrants. Later, a more favorable immigration framework paved the way for increased levels of migration.

They did not come to the United States as missionaries, but nevertheless used the opportunity of being here to preach the gospel and establish churches. Their primary target was their own people. The Bahamians were the earliest to arrive. They were a formidable force and made up a significant portion of the black population. Keith Tinker’s estimate of 52 percent of the black population and 16 percent of the entire population of the city of Miami characterizes the impact of Bahamian migration by 1920. Fifteen of the twenty-one pastors serving the church in 1967 were Bahamians. While the

Jamaicans came much later, their influence on the COGOP was to be equally important, for they would dominate church planting from 1967.

The success of these pioneering Bahamians and Jamaicans in ministering outside their culture is, however, abysmal and there is no institutional program aimed at assisting them to redress this weakness. Additionally, the vast majority of the present crop of pastors were born in those countries and have been under the direct influence of the COGOP for most of their lives. Despite the clear evidence from the survey of intentionality in trying to remain culturally neutral in their fellowship and worship services, these churches have had very limited success in attracting large numbers from other cultures.

While opinions in the literature on the plausibility of planting homogenous churches are divided, this principle is advocated with some justification by McGavran on the basis that “people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.”<sup>5</sup> Malphurs’ defense of the principle is especially helpful. Like McGavran, he acknowledges that “lost people are most comfortable with those with whom they feel an affinity.”<sup>6</sup> He decries the “kneejerk” reaction of some on the basis of race and class and maintains that as a homogenous unit church grows it will then begin to “attract people from other ethnic groups and become more heterogeneous.”<sup>7</sup> While this ideal is realizable in the case of blacks becoming members of white-led churches, the reverse is less likely, and so black churches find it difficult to attract whites. This raises the vexing

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<sup>5</sup> McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 163.

<sup>6</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 168.

<sup>7</sup> Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, 171.

question, how does a movement like the COGOP attract other races to its congregations in South Florida?

### **Reasons for Poor Growth of the COGOP in South Florida**

While the COGOP has a very high view of scripture, a truth which is conveyed in the very covenant its members subscribe to, it is not known for its theological reflection. It is best known for its ecclesiology, which was undoubtedly exclusive in nature and the structure of its governance was peculiarly patterned after the government of the United States, a system perpetuated during the tenure of the founding General Overseer, Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson, and his son Milton Ambrose Tomlinson who succeeded him in 1943. This exclusivity and the peculiar doctrinal position taken on cultural issues governing outward appearance, served as a deterrent to many who came under the influence of the church. Because of this exclusive position, the early COGOP congregations did not work in co-operation with other Christians. With the change in the church's theological outlook, pastors and their congregations have become more involved with other church groups and as a result are much more visible within their communities.

These churches recognize the importance of prayer to their evangelism efforts and so engage their local churches in this spiritual discipline. They are, however, lacking in properly planned evangelism programs that involve a wider cross-section of their congregations. Their evangelism and outreach suffer from a lack of proper funding and hence promotion is affected. Indeed, finances or the lack thereof seem to have affected the ability of the churches to grow, a phenomenon which continues today. The District structure is not exploited to conduct more effective evangelism and missionary

endeavors, and so small churches are left to struggle without the help of much stronger churches or a collaborative effort.

Another striking reason for the weak growth of the COGOP is its inability to plant and grow multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-generation congregations. Of the four white churches that existed in 1967, three were planted in 1932, one in the 1940s and the other in 1964. This suggests that these churches were planted simultaneously with the black churches, possibly the result of the segregation laws of that period. Two issues arise from this: First and most glaring was the unwillingness of the COGOP, because of the risk of being prosecuted, to plant integrated congregations that were open to blacks and whites as a policy, and by so doing side with its persecuted black brothers and sisters. Second, with the ending of the Jim Crow laws and with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, did the church do enough to make sure that these homogenous white churches took the lead in bringing about racial reconciliation? The evidence suggests that the church failed in this regard, as all except one of the white churches ceased to operate with any white members. Villafañe is right in pointing out the tardiness of white Americans in acknowledging the pluralistic society in which we live.<sup>8</sup>

While the COGOP as a denomination continues to enjoy recognition for the diversity that exists within its ranks, its inability to engage its constituency in meaningful dialogue renders it missiologically impotent. Its efforts aimed at “soul winning” lack strategic thinking and it is without a plan to reap the harvest of a very diverse population in South Florida, and other geographical areas with a similar diversity. The efforts of the only remaining white church and its pastor to become a multi-cultural church must be

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<sup>8</sup> A point of reference of Villafane in addressing the attitudes of Americans towards the immigrants in the Literature Review, page 34.

commended, but need support. There is, however, reason for hope that if the present effort of one congregation in Central Florida, about which more will be said later, can be replicated here and everywhere, an opportunity to integrate cultures will present itself.

Homogeneity is more than racial integration and harmony. The most recent churches planted by blacks have been predominantly along nationalistic lines, much in keeping with McGavran's prognostication.<sup>9</sup> Most of them do not show any tendency to develop into heterogeneous units. The only church planted by a Bahamian during the period is now 90 percent Jamaican, because the neighborhood it serves is predominantly Jamaican. The church planter continues to pastor that church. Blacks of different cultures and nationalities are faced with similar issues to do with a lack of racial harmony. Their co-existence is often superficial, trust issues arise and they do not always embrace wholeheartedly the task of working together for a common cause.

With the ending of the Tomlinson "dynasty" in 1990, Billy D. Murray led the church into a more orthodox ecclesiology. At the same time there was a paradigm shift from a strong central government to a more pluralistic structure and a greater emphasis on the harvest through the establishment of strong local churches. The financial burden on the central government had become unbearable and so this paradigm shift was made which effectively dismantled the centralized system, allowing local churches to keep more of their resources. The paradigm shift may have been well-intentioned, but it was poorly implemented, and the proverbial baby was thrown out with the bathwater. In its own way, the old structure of the COGOP had been guided by a missional mindset and it had a footprint that demonstrated this. The local churches, the state, and national churches, while retaining some funds in their coffers from the changes, were ill-prepared

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<sup>9</sup> Donald McGavran is a strong proponent of the significance of the homogenous unit.

to replace the role played by the international offices in maintaining this missional outlook. Then there was the high cost of designing and printing promotional material and a lack of personnel to properly plan major outreach activities. The simultaneous closing of the only accredited institution of higher learning, was probably not a good idea in retrospect. The cost, in terms of human capital development, is not to be compared to the financial savings from the closure of the institution. The states with smaller budgets were twinned under a single Regional Overseer who was expected to evangelize a vastly expanded area on the same budget. Such an action reduced them to administrators, hence the often used term, Administrative Bishops.

John Kotter's *Leading Change* reminds its readers that the "downside of change is inevitable"<sup>10</sup> and he identifies eight blatant errors most organizations make in implementing change (see Figure 7 below). The Church of God of Prophecy admits that, "Although the work of the Church is essentially spiritual, it cannot be denied that there is a business element involved also."<sup>11</sup> It argues for the need for financial means to do the work, suggesting that "[t]horough organization is necessary in order to see that one part of the work is not neglected at the indulgence of another."<sup>12</sup> The church's decision to make those fundamental changes begs the questions, did the church employ normal business principles in arriving at the decisions it made? Is the system currently in place able to avoid the errors associated with organizational changes?

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<sup>10</sup> John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Bible Training Institute of the Church of God of Prophecy, *Lessons in Bible Training*, (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House & Press, 1969), 108.

<sup>12</sup> Bible Training Institute, *Lessons in Bible Training*, 108.

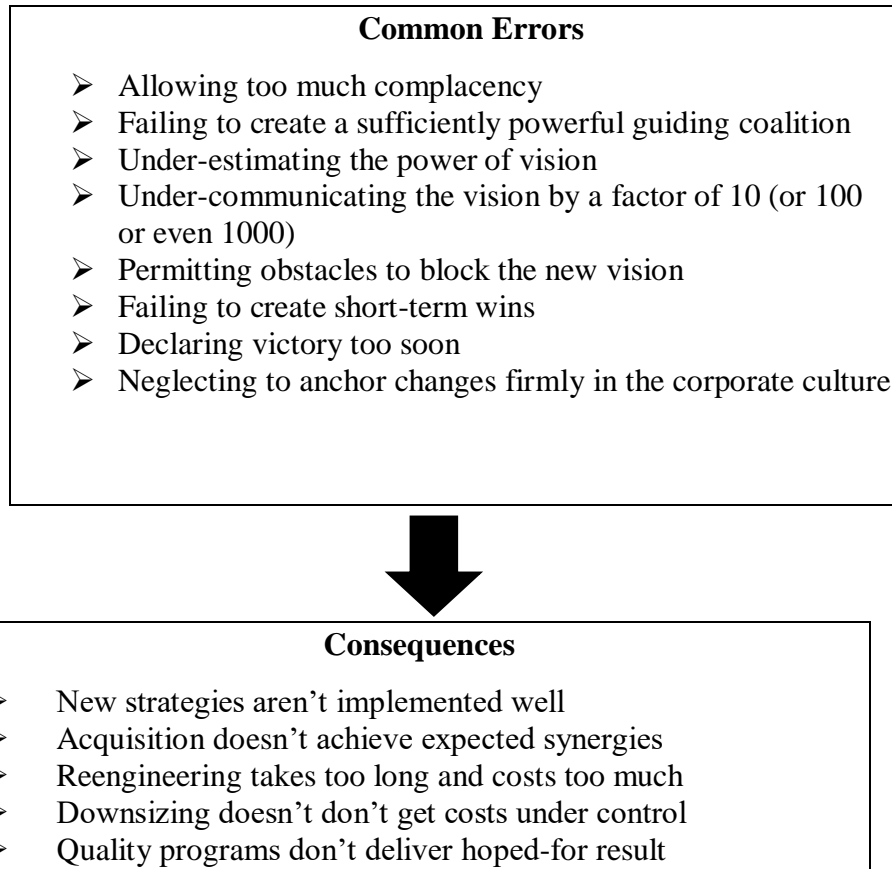


Figure 7. Eight Errors Common to Organizational Change Efforts and Their Consequences<sup>13</sup>

### **Challenges to the Growth of the COGOP in South Florida**

The absence of raw membership data for the base point of 1967 has had a negative impact on the extent to which the growth in the churches can be measured in this study. It is unquestionable, however, that there has been growth and the information gleaned can help us in our understanding of the impact of the Jamaicans and Bahamians on that growth. The number of churches grew by a net of nine from the twenty-one that existed in 1967.

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<sup>13</sup> Kotter, *Leading Change*, 3-16.

As mentioned earlier, the pastors of South Florida are making an effort to reach other people groups through the employment of a race-neutral environment, by avoiding their Caribbean heritage in terms of music selection and sermon styles. They have been deliberate in including their youth population in the worship experience and business decision making. They are, however, hampered by inadequate finances, which is impacting their outreach activities and their ability to add even clerical staff to assist in the difficult work of ministry in very diverse communities.

The church has obviously had difficulty in merging people of different ethnicities and cultures. Of four churches that had a white congregation in 1967, only one continues under white leadership with a mixed congregation. This church is however very small and the white population is on the decline. Whether or not the pastor possesses the will or the skill to forge a successful merger of the cultures and build a healthy congregation is yet to be seen. All of the others have lost their white constituencies and the general church has not implemented any plan or program aimed at helping pastors on the ground overcome the difficulties of cross-cultural ministry. This failure has inhibited a more robust growth. The COGOP enjoys recognition for its diversity, based on its overall racial composition and the representation of minorities in some upper levels of leadership. However, there is a real problem in local settings, as integration is not in evidence on a large scale. The matter is compounded by the fact that many within the church are uncomfortable discussing race and its impact on the church's outreach. A worthwhile program for the denomination would be one designed to help minorities win and lead whites in the churches.



The literature reviewed shows most authors recommend that churches that exist in multi-cultural communities need to be acutely aware of and sensitive to the differences between peoples, while at the same time respecting the fact that God sees all people as one. In *What is Mission*, Kirk observes that “the gospel ended all ideas that some peoples were superior to others.”<sup>14</sup> He is clear that the “gospel demanded a full and equal status for Gentiles and Jews.”<sup>15</sup> The issue goes beyond race, however, as Kirk observes. He points out the pros and cons of ethnic and national distinctiveness and calls for a greater “awareness of the benefits of and the harm of cultural identity,”<sup>16</sup> as he believes this awareness is “fundamental for Christians to live out the Gospel.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Breaking the Barrier**

If the identified shortcomings are to be overcome, the process of overcoming must be intentional. There are two ways this can be achieved. One is through meaningful dialogue and the other is through training those who lead the churches and those who will attempt the arduous task of planting churches that will grow.

If Chris Lowney is correct about the Catholic Church needing a better way to train its priests,<sup>18</sup> then the Church of God of Prophecy also needs to find a way. Formal theological training is not a requirement for entering the pastoral ministry of the COGOP, although it is in no way opposed to formal training, as evidenced by its own foray into

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<sup>14</sup> J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission* (Augsburg, MN: Fortress, 2000), 77.

<sup>15</sup> Kirk, *What is Mission*, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Kirk, *What is Mission*, 79.

<sup>17</sup> Kirk, *What is Mission*, 79.

<sup>18</sup> Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2013), 3.

providing quality, accredited higher education to the first degree level through Tomlinson College in 1966. There is, however, a glaring shortcoming, as the number of pastors who have formal theological training is relatively small. This is especially true when one considers the fact that ministry is being done for a more educated, post-modern, post-Christian generation that is increasingly suspicious of organized religion.

Historically, the church has placed emphasis on short-term training modules and seminars for training its pastors and laity in the polity of the church, in biblical studies, theology, and the history of Christianity. The state of Florida has been slow to offer the continuing education modules under the School of Practical and Advanced Studies (SOPAS), which could further enhance the knowledge of its leaders and better prepare them and the laity to do ministry within their respective contexts.

Currently, in addition to the short term, unaccredited courses offered, the COGOP has entered consortium arrangements with fully accredited Lee University, Gordon-Conwell, and Pentecostal Theological Seminaries under a fully staffed Accredited Ministries Department. Offerings range from a Diploma in Wesleyan-Pentecostalism Ministry to Doctor of Ministry degrees. While all the pastors have completed the basic requirement for ordination, they have not seized the benefits of these programs as only one pastor from the region is enrolled. A meaningful scholarship program for those who are in ministry, especially at the pastoral level, and a deliberate attempt from the denomination to target pastors for enrolment, could go a long way in motivating participation. Additionally, it is crucial that next generation leadership be identified and placed in a special leadership development program that includes the assignment of

mentors. This may require the provision of scholarship and grants to ensure those persons enter formal theological training in an urban setting.

These programs are heavily weighted academically, however, and must be bolstered by the inclusion of practical studies in urban ministry, even at the level of SOPAS. The literature review shows a clear bias towards the formal training of pastors, especially as it relates to training in cross-cultural ministry. Webber argues strongly for the training of those who lead the church, while Villafañe and Ortiz are stout in their defense of the critical role of formal training that is culturally sensitive, especially as it relates to the urban setting, if churches are to reach their communities. Villafañe sees a vital importance in the training of the laity alongside the clergy, especially for the context of cross-cultural urban ministry. Duane Elmer's six tips for developing "skills in cross-cultural effectiveness"<sup>19</sup> are especially useful and should be considered as a separate training module for people serving in urban settings.

### **The Way Forward: Planning for Growth**

The leadership of COGOP in South Florida must seek to recapture the "enthusiastic, evangelical style of preaching and ability to motivate and stimulate exuberant celebration of Christ"<sup>20</sup> of one of its most successful former pastors and District Overseers, Herman E. Dean. Dean embodies the missional Pentecostal zeal that characterized the movement in its infancy and that still appeals to a wide cross-section of

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<sup>19</sup> Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping and Filling In Around the World* (Downer's Grove, IL: 2002), 106-113.

<sup>20</sup> Kevan Dean and Terry L. Brown, *Ezekiel: Yuma's Native Son* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2011), 79.

the immigrant communities. Three of the larger churches in the region are almost all Jamaican and they continue to grow. The churches must also become intentional in their effort to win people of other cultures and ethnicities. David Henderson agrees that there has to be a different approach taken to “communicat[ing] biblical truth in a leave-me-alone world.”<sup>21</sup> He recommends three things be borne in mind. First, how we preach and teach, secondly, how we share our faith, and thirdly, what we communicate.<sup>22</sup> In identifying the differences in preaching styles between contemporary preachers, Carl George makes the point that “the impassioned and colorful antics” of speakers of the past would not have “audiences respond to them in the same ways bygone audiences responded in the spiritual revivals that once swept across the continent.”<sup>23</sup> George describes successful contemporary pastors as “exceptional teachers, capable of conveying imaginative word pictures.”<sup>24</sup>

The COGOP in Florida could lead the way for the rest of the movement and bring about “deep change” in racial reconciliation, which could in turn have major missiological implications. The COGOP must engage its constituency in meaningful dialogue aimed at creating genuine racial reconciliation and racial sensitivity, which will undoubtedly free the movement to be more missional in its activities. Audrey Chapman’s essay, “Truth Commission as Instruments of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” in the book *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, acknowledges that there is short-term divisiveness

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<sup>21</sup> David Henderson, *Culture Shift: Communicating God’s Truth to our Changing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 112.

<sup>22</sup> Henderson, *Culture Shift*, 112-119.

<sup>23</sup> Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1996), 36.

<sup>24</sup> George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, 36.

and complexity to truth-finding, but nevertheless sees truth finding as “indispensable for long-term reconciliation.” Chapman advocates dialogue that “encourages groups to face up to deep-seated memories of guilt and hurt, culpability and sufferings as a basis for healing and working toward a united society.”<sup>25</sup>

Generally speaking, the church has enjoyed mutual co-existence with surface relationships and portrays these as diverse and multi-cultural expressions. In describing the process by which the apartheid regime of South Africa gave way to a unified nation, Desmond Tutu notes that “unless the past was acknowledged and dealt with adequately, it could put paid to that future a baneful blight on it.”<sup>26</sup> While a truth commission may not be necessary—it was necessary in the case of South Africa—the COGOP must not shy away from the painful short-term consequences of “deep remembering”<sup>27</sup> in its quest “to face up to deep-seated memories of guilt and hurt, culpability and suffering as a basis for healing and working toward a united society.”<sup>28</sup> Such an approach would at least eliminate the need for leadership to be apprehensive about being labeled as racist when making meaningful change aimed at growing the churches.

During one of my writing retreats, I visited a COGOP congregation in Central Florida, located minutes away from the State’s administrative office. This church is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural congregation pastored by a Caucasian. It is succeeding where the churches of the south failed in the 1970s, in that it has been transformed from being a

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<sup>25</sup> Audrey Chapman, “Truth Commission as Instruments of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick, and Rodney L. Petersen ( Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 257-277.

<sup>26</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 35.

<sup>27</sup> Chapman, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 261.

<sup>28</sup> Chapman, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, 261.

white-only congregation. This could be the result of the passage of time, but surely it is not happening because of an absence of intentionality. A discussion with the pastor revealed that they have been intentional about creating an atmosphere conducive to people of all cultures and ethnicities worshiping as one congregation. The church has grown as a result, much of it through relocation of people from England and the Caribbean, but whites are coming to Christ as well. Any gain so far must be strengthened by an honest request for persons from minority cultures who minister to remain mindful of other cultures during their presentations, and every effort must be made to avoid competition.

This particular church is in the process of planting another church in a neighboring city. The new plant pastor is Jamaican who is relatively new to the country, the congregation presently is Jamaican, and the worship style is distinctly Jamaican. The Jamaican population in that city is small, however. The sponsoring church provides financial support for the new church plant by assuming the rental cost. They share space with a Haitian congregation that is with the denomination. A worrying sign is that there is no overt attempt to build a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural congregation in the new church. This weakness arguably results from a lack of “deep remembering” and the absence of training in cross-cultural ministry. The planting of churches that are prepared to minister cross-culturally without the fear of being labeled as racist is certainly an outcome which could facilitate healthy growth of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-generational churches, a phenomena South Florida could benefit from.

If the COGOP in South Florida is to succeed in overcoming the marginal gains it has made in its last fifty years of existence, a number of issues must be addressed at both

the international and national levels. At the state level, it is critical that administrators become proactive in their assessment and forecasting in addressing slow growth. Growth will not happen in a vacuum and the church's confidence in God to "add to the church daily such as are being saved" (Acts 2: 47), does not mean there is no need to do anything. The slow growth must be addressed and this can be achieved in two ways.

1. The church must be engaged in planting churches that will grow. To do so it must:
  - a) Establish an independent Evangelism and Discipleship Department, transferring discipleship from its present home of Leadership Development and Discipleship. This department will work in tandem with any local church/pastor that is embarking on a church planting mission and provide financial help to churches that are participating in church planting and utilizing the training offered by the Department.
  - b) Develop a clearly defined and well-articulated policy for church planting that eliminates lone ranger church planters. The ministerial license authorization of all ministers as church planters should be eliminated.
  - c) Prepare a Church Planters' Training Manual with workbooks.
  - d) Help the local church or sponsoring agency identify the church planting team.
  - e) Ensure the mandatory training of all prospective church planters and their teams.
  - f) Help with budget preparation and recommend the level of assistance to be given from the state funds for church planting.
  - g) Demonstrate intentionality, by mobilizing church planters among other ethnic or racial groups without the fear of reprisal.

Such an approach would lead to greater innovation in church planting in areas requiring a higher level of planning and intentionality. One such area would be newer, richer suburban communities. There has not been a Church of God of Prophecy congregation planted in one of these communities in Miami-Dade or Broward since 1967. In Palm Beach County, there have been some churches planted in these upwardly mobile communities. These were done by lone rangers with little or no institutional support and very weak financial resources. Their impact has been negligible. In *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, Carl George writes about intentionality as it relates to the growth of a church growth beyond its humble beginnings. He makes the salient point that his own Baptist denomination “had a heritage of poor, little-educated pastors working with poor, working-class people. Thus we’ve not been perceived by elite, sophisticated people as a crowd they’d like to join.”<sup>29</sup>

2. The church must be bold in providing leadership that assesses local churches and pastors’ effectiveness, making the necessary changes that could result in growth. This must be the first step in ensuring the revitalization of stagnant or dying churches. To achieve this, it is incumbent on leadership to embark on a sustained campaign that will result in meaningful change that translates into growth.
  - a) This campaign should be spearheaded by the District Overseers in conjunction with the State Presiding Bishop. District Overseers’ appointments should be term limited to eliminate complacency.
  - b) These campaigns should include training in cross-cultural ministry. Training should be spearheaded by each District Overseer with the assistance of

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<sup>29</sup> Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 34.



representatives from the State Evangelism and Discipleship, and Leadership Departments and outside experts should be brought in if warranted.

- c) Training should be carried out at all levels of the church, not just for the clergy.
- d) The youth population should be mobilized, since they are the most likely to succeed in creating traction out of the friction migration creates in diverse communities. They are suited to the task, because children do not see color as adults do. Secondly, they are at the forefront of the new technological revolution which remains untapped for missional purposes among COGOP churches.

### **Conclusion**

The Church of God of Prophecy has evolved beyond its humble beginnings, shaking off much of the stigma attached to it from its Pentecostal ecstatic worship, suspect theology, and seeming anti-intellectualism. Its entry into South Florida is attributed to a Bahamian and its subsequent growth is the result of the combined efforts of Bahamians and Jamaicans, who came to the United States in search of a better way of life. Over the last fifty years, the church has seen negative growth among whites and there is no overt attempt to preach the gospel to whites, Native Americans, and Asians. With the passage of time people who now report being of Jamaican and Bahamian descent will be claiming American heritage, as in the case of three of the pastors surveyed. Notwithstanding this reality, the Church of God of Prophecy must become pro-

active and take to heart Erwin McManus's words, "Today the call to cross-cultural ministry doesn't even require going, it just requires staying with a purpose."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had In Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001), 45.

## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

**Topic:** THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION FROM THE BAHAMAS AND JAMAICA ON THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY IN SOUTH FLORIDA, 1967-2017.

Thanks for agreeing to take part in this research. Accordingly, please complete all sections as much as is possible using the internal records of your local church, or through oral history of older members of your congregation. There is no need to include your name on the document.

#### Section I

Name of Church:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date church was planted: \_\_\_\_\_ (approximate if not certain)

#### **At time of planting**

Nationality/Descent of Founding Pastor:

\_\_\_\_\_

Total Membership at Founding: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Racial mix** at founding? \_\_\_\_% Whites \_\_\_\_% Blacks

Nationality/Descent of **Membership** at Founding? \_\_\_\_% Bahamians \_\_\_\_% Jamaicans  
\_\_\_\_% Others

#### **Membership by age:**

\_\_\_\_% Under 20 years old      \_\_\_\_% 21- 40 years old      \_\_\_\_% 41- 60 years old  
\_\_\_\_% over 60 years

#### **1967**

Nationality/Descent of Pastor:

\_\_\_\_\_

Total Membership: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Racial mix**      \_\_\_\_% Whites \_\_\_\_% Blacks

Nationality/Descent of **Membership**? \_\_\_\_% Bahamians \_\_\_\_% Jamaicans  
\_\_\_\_% Others

**Membership by age:**

\_\_\_\_% Under 20 years old      \_\_\_\_% 21- 40 years old      \_\_\_\_ % 41- 60 years old  
\_\_\_\_% over 60 years

**2017**

Name of Present Pastor (Optional):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Nationality/Descent of Present Pastor:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Total Membership: \_\_\_\_\_.

Racial mix \_\_\_\_% Whites \_\_\_\_% Blacks

Nationality/Descent of **Membership**?      \_\_\_\_% Bahamians \_\_\_\_% Jamaicans  
\_\_\_\_% Others

Nationality/Descent of **Senior Leadership** (Ministers, Deacons, Ministry Leaders)?  
\_\_\_\_\_% Bahamians \_\_\_\_ % Jamaicans \_\_\_\_% Others

**Membership by age:**

\_\_\_\_% Under 20 years old      \_\_\_\_% 21- 40 years old      \_\_\_\_ % 41- 60 years old  
\_\_\_\_% over 60 years

**Pastoral Leadership**

Are you \_\_\_\_ Full time    or \_\_\_\_ Bi-vocational?

No. of paid employees of church that is not the Pastor? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Pastors serving this church over the past 50 years or since church was  
planted? \_\_\_\_

**Leadership Development**

Level Education?    \_\_High School Diploma    \_\_Associates Degree    \_\_Bachelor's Degree  
\_\_\_\_Graduate Degree

Theological Training      \_\_ Master's & Doctoral level    \_\_ Bachelors or Associates  
\_\_\_\_ SOPAS    \_\_ Foundations Course    \_\_ BTI/BTC  
\_\_\_\_ Other (state) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently enrolled in any leadership development program?    \_\_ Yes    \_\_ No

If so where? \_\_\_\_\_

What program (s) does your church use regularly to promote evangelism? (Please check all that applies)

- |                                            |                                                       |                                               |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Revival services  | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home visitation   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday Worship Services      | <input type="checkbox"/> Webpage              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Street witnessing | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Intervention Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Evangelism     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campus ministry   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mailers                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Tract and literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home small groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio/TV                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other_____           |

## Section II

Please read the following statements carefully and indicate your views on each by placing an (x) in the box that shows the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

SA = Strongly Agree   A = Agree   N = Neutral   D = Disagree   SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I am comfortable ministering to people of all races or cultures.	—	—	—	—	—
2. I have been influenced by the COGOP from childhood.	—	—	—	—	—
3. My church is visible in our community and we work closely with people of other races.	—	—	—	—	—
4. Our church is very careful in utilizing a "race neutral" language in our worship services.	—	—	—	—	—
5. People of all races and nationality attend our worship services.	—	—	—	—	—
6. Sermon illustrations are distinctly Caribbean.	—	—	—	—	—
7. Our evangelism efforts include the involvement of the laity.	—	—	—	—	—
8. Story lines used in sermons are identifiable by the locals.	—	—	—	—	—
9. We consciously chose speakers and singers who are able to minister across cultures.	—	—	—	—	—
10. Finances are not a deterrent to us doing evangelism and outreach.	—	—	—	—	—
11. So called "white" music could fit into our worship services.	—	—	—	—	—
12. All of our outreach and evangelism efforts are properly promoted using electronic, print and social media.	—	—	—	—	—
13. My church is located in a community that all race feels comfortable visiting.	—	—	—	—	—
14. Fasting and praying are the key ingredients to church growth.	—	—	—	—	—
15. It is too costly to promote all of our outreach activities	—	—	—	—	—
16. Our church is involved with other churches in spreading the gospel.	—	—	—	—	—
17. Persons involved in evangelism and outreach are trained to reach people of other nationalities.	—	—	—	—	—
18. The church facilities are inviting, has adequate parking and facilities to minister to children and youths,	—	—	—	—	—

19.	Our church is careful in incorporating peoples of all cultures in leadership roles and leading worship.	—	—	—	—
20.	Musical selection at our church is especially geared towards the older members.	—	—	—	—
21.	A person from another culture or race would feel comfortable worshipping at our church.	—	—	—	—
22.	Young people are incorporated into our programming and leadership decision making.	—	—	—	—
23.	My local church does not need any financial help.	—	—	—	—
24.	Programs of social intervention are integral to the gospel witness.	—	—	—	—
25.	The local church has invested in training the youth population for outreach and evangelism.	—	—	—	—
26.	My local church has been deliberate in trying to reach all ethnic groups.	—	—	—	—
27.	Worship at our church employs both traditional hymns and contemporary songs.	—	—	—	—
28.	COGOP has programs aimed at helping churches do evangelism to people of all culture.	—	—	—	—
29.	The local church carries a mortgage or is paying lease.	—	—	—	—
30.	Appointment of Caucasian pastors could help in reaching other cultures or ethnicity.	—	—	—	—
31.	My church operates primarily on volunteerism.	—	—	—	—
32.	There is an organized program of evangelism at the local church.	—	—	—	—
33.	We are deliberate in our efforts to reach people of Jamaican/Bahamian descent.	—	—	—	—
34.	The cost for using technology and media in church outreach and evangelism is too expensive.	—	—	—	—
35.	Worship music is distinctly Afro-Caribbean.	—	—	—	—
36.	The church and its ministry activities are properly promoted in the media and social media.	—	—	—	—

## APPENDIX B

### ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

#### Hebrew Old Testament

Genesis	Gen	Ecclesiastes	Eccl
Exodus	Exod	Song of Solomon	Song
Leviticus	Lev	Isaiah	Isa
Numbers	Num	Jeremiah	Jer
Deuteronomy	Deut	Lamentations	Lam
Joshua	Josh	Ezekiel	Ezek
Judges	Judg	Daniel	Dan
Ruth	Ruth	Hosea	Hos
1-2 Samuel	1-2 Sam	Joel	Joel
1-2 Kings	1-2 Kgs	Amos	Amos
1-2 Chronicles	1-2 Chr	Obadiah	Obad
Ezra	Ezra	Jonah	Jonah
Nehemiah	Neh	Micah	Mic
Esther	Esth	Nahum	Nah
Job	Job	Habakkuk	Hab
Psalms	Ps/Pss	Zephaniah	Zeph
Proverbs	Prov	Haggai	Hag
		Zechariah	Zech
		Malachi	Mal

#### New Testament

Matthew	Matt	1-2 Thessalonians	1-2 Thess
Mark	Mark	1-2 Timothy	1-2 Tim
Luke	Luke	Titus	Titus
John	John	Philemon	Phlm
Acts	Acts	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jas
1-2 Corinthians	1-2 Cor	1-2 Peter	1-2 Pet
Galatians	Gal	1-2-3 John	1-2-3 John
Ephesians	Eph	Jude	Jude
Philippians	Phil	Revelations	Rev



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